INSIDE YOUR 64-PAGE WEEKEND MAGAZINE

The 10 best Scottish books to read this summer

WEEKEND MAGAZINE
'In Scotland, any English person is automatically posh'
TEDDY JAMIESON TALKS TO AUTHOR GABRIELLA BENNETT

INSIDE: 24-PAGE SPORT PULLOUT

SPECIAL REPORT

The painful truth behind Scottish football's talent drain

The Herald
The Fixtures
Scotland's quality Saturday sports section
As SFA call crisis talks amid talent drain, Stephen McGowan gets the inside story on where we've gone wrong
End of the line?
Inside your 24-page weekend Sport...
Trevor Carson on his struggles with gambling and failed move to Celtic
Willie Woodburn Rangers legend's legacy restored by latest book
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The Herald

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Scottish Labour frontrunner accused of staff sacking plot

Sources claim MP Marra wanted to put party jobs at risk

Exclusive

Rebecca McCurdy and Andrew Learmonth

SCOTTISH Labour's leadership contest has been plunged into chaos over claims Michael Marra wanted to sack party staff and put them on short-term contracts after May's disastrous election.

The allegations, made to The Herald, were met with furious denials from his campaign and allies. The North East MSP has cleared the threshold of nominations required from parliamentarians to stand, but is understood to be facing a tougher task securing the necessary trade union endorsements.

The disputed comments came during a post-election debrief of Scottish Labour MSPs.

In the meeting, sources told The Herald that Mr Marra suggested around a dozen staff in the party's Holyrood support unit be placed on short-term contracts while assessments were carried out on what the party needed.

One insider told us Mr Marra's proposal was that staff be moved on to rolling three-month contracts "so we can work out what we actually need".

They said it was unclear if he meant this to apply to existing staff or future hires only.

A Scottish Labour source said: "The idea that staff would be put at risk of redundancy, or put on insecure contracts with worse terms and conditions, is completely against the values the party stands for,

"Labour in government is currently taking steps to strengthen the rights of workers across the UK. That this is taking place while Michael Marra appears to be trying to do the opposite behind the scenes severely undermines his credibility as someone who will stand up for workers."

That account has been strongly disputed by the Marra campaign and by other MSPs, who have instead accused whoever briefed the story of exploiting a sensitive staffing situation for political advantage during the leadership race.

Mr Marra wrote to the party's GMB-organised Holyrood staff after The Herald approached his team for comment, telling them the briefing was "both inaccurate and wholly unacceptable", insisting: "I want to reassure you the work that all the staff in Parliament do is immensely appreciated.

"Too often, the party of workers' rights treats its own workers poorly. It's not good enough and I would not accept it as leader.

"I am angry that staff are being used in this way when they have little right to reply.

"That culture will stop if I am

Continued on Page 4

Girl, 11, is found dead in river after search

AN 11-year-old girl has died after emergency services found her in a river at a woodland park in Midlothian.

A search had taken place earlier due to "reports of concern" for a young girl in Gore Glen Woodland Park, near Gorebridge.

The child was found at around 4.25pm on Thursday and was pronounced dead at the scene.

Yesterday, officers maintained a cordon around paths that pass underneath Shank Bridge, with police tape blocking access along the walking route. The bridge carries the A7 road over the Gore Water.

On the bridge, a single bunch of flowers had been left tucked in the railings at the side of the road.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service said it sent

Police at scene yesterday

two fire engines to the area to support the search.

Two ambulances, a special operations team and a critical care paramedic from the Scottish Ambulance Service were also at the scene.

A police spokesman said: "We were made aware of concern for an 11-year-old girl in the Gore Glen area, near Gorebridge, around 12.40pm on Thursday.

"The body of the girl was found in the Gore Water near Shank Bridge around 4.25pm. She was pronounced dead at the scene.

"Her death is being treated as unexplained and inquiries are ongoing to establish the full circumstances."

The Gore Water runs through the park, which is a beauty spot with views of the Pentland Hills to the south of Edinburgh.

Colin Beattie, the MSP for Midlothian North, said: "My thoughts are with her family, friends and all those affected by this heartbreaking loss."

Miner's son reveals £10m art collection

Exclusive

Sandra Dick

FROM a miners' row in Bellshill to one of the world's most significant private collections of Scottish art, Peter Shaw's journey is extraordinary.

Raised in a working-class family with deep roots in Lanarkshire's coal mining communities, Shaw grew up far removed from the elite world of galleries and collectors. Yet a love of art, inspired by a print of Salvador Dali's Christ Of St John Of the Cross hanging above the family fireplace, stayed with him throughout his life.

After becoming an "accidental millionaire" through the 1996 sale of Strathclyde Buses, Mr Shaw chose not to spend his fortune on luxury. Instead, he devoted more than three decades to building a £10 million collection of almost 12,000 Scottish artworks, ranging from Allan Ramsay and Henry Raeburn to the Glasgow Boys, Glasgow Girls and contemporary artists.

Having kept the collection private for years, Mr Shaw has revealed his ambition to create a new public gallery outside Scotland's traditional cultural hubs.

Full Story – Page 15

Picture: Mark F Gibson

Tattoo aims to launch more events worldwide

Exclusive

Brian Ferguson

MULTIPLE versions of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo could be up and running around the world within the next two years, its organisers have revealed.

New indoor and outdoor productions are being developed for different continents under efforts to establish the Tattoo as a global "performance powerhouse".

Separate shows designed for outdoor stadiums, indoor arenas and theatres are all in development as part of the new strategy, which is aimed at building on the appeal of

Continued on Page 6

Glasgow announces Arday probe

Gaby McKay

THE University of Glasgow has said it will review the appointment of Professor Jason Arday amid claims of plagiarism.

The academic resigned from his position at Cambridge University this week following two weeks of scrutiny over his work.

Professor Arday was accused late last year of having plagiarised parts of his PhD thesis at John Moores University in Liverpool, with similarities to another thesis by Paula Zwozdiak-Myers, a student at Brunel University of London, published six years previously. John Moores had previously carried out an investigation that did not uphold charges of plagiarism and put the similarities down to "honest and reasonable error".

Professor Arday was employed by Glasgow University for a little over a year between 2022 and 2023, and his profile on the Cambridge Faculty of Education listed him as a "visiting professor" at the institution, which was later found to be inaccurate. He had never held that status.

The university has now said it will

Continued on Page 8

Jason Arday was at Glasgow University for just over a year

No toilets on West Coast trains

A TRAIN operator is running services lasting more than five-and-a-half hours despite having no available toilets.

Some of Lumo's services on the West Coast Main Line between Stirling and London Euston are operating despite all onboard toilets being out of use.

The FirstGroup-owned company warned about "a fault" with the toilets in a post on social media platform X on August 1.

Services have been stopping for longer at stations such as Preston to allow passengers to get off and use toilets on platforms.

The 6.11am departure from London Euston yesterday, which was affected, ran with a 58-minute delay and terminated at Motherwell.

Lumo operates its West Coast services with refurbished Class 222 Meridian trains. These are also used by East Midlands Railway, which has suffered toilet faults.

Train operators in Britain are not legally required to provide onboard toilets.

A Lumo spokesman said: "We have been experiencing some issues with the reliability of some of our toilet facilities on board our West Coast services."

ISSN 0965-9434 £3.20

EUROMILLIONS

LAST night's National Lottery EuroMillions winning numbers are: 26, 29, 35, 38, 47. The lucky stars are: 01, 02.

The estimated jackpot is £94 million.

Millionaire maker selection – one UK millionaire has been created: TNXR81195.

The National Lottery Thunderball winning numbers are: 04, 18, 28, 30, 34. The Thunderball is 11.

PLUS

The Big Read
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Opinion
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Letters
Pages 22 & 23

Puzzles
Pages 24 & 28

Announcements
Page 25

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Clarifications and corrections

IT IS The Herald's policy to correct errors as soon as we can and all corrections and clarifications will usually appear on this page.

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NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING

The recycled paper content of UK newspapers in 2022 was 53%.

Relief for Cairngorms village as wildfire cordon lifted after weeks of disruption

PART of the wildfire cordon around a village in the Cairngorms has been lifted after weeks of firefighting efforts to contain it.

Road and access restrictions have been in place around the Glenmore area as firefighters tackled the wildfire in Cairngorms National Park since it began near Ryvoan Bothy, near Aviemore, on July 15.

After three weeks of disruption, the national park's managing authority confirmed the C7 Ski Road, known as the Glenmore corridor, opened yesterday morning.

However, some areas directly impacted by the fire will continue to be restricted for safety, plus some roads near Abernethy Forest. This includes the Forest Lodge access road Lettoch Road and Dorback.

Sandy McCook, chairman of the Nethy Bridge and vicinity community council, said the situation had improved but there is still danger from the wildfire, which continues to burn underground in peatland.

Speaking to Radio Scotland's Breakfast programme, he said smoke from the fire had appeared "apocalyptic" at its height.

He said: "Things have calmed down. The fire is still by no means out. There's a perception with people that if there's no smoke, there's no fire. But the fire is still burning underground."

He said the three-week closure had impacted businesses in the popular tourist area, which rely heavily on trade during the summer months.

"It's it's still very much an ongoing incident without any known end," he added.

Grant Moir, chief executive at the Cairngorms National Park Authority, said earlier: "This milestone has only been possible thanks to the huge effort of businesses, volunteers and partner organisations who have worked tirelessly to make the area safe and prepare for reopening."

More than 500 firefighters have been deployed to fight the blaze, which has devastated an estimated 25 square kilometres (9.65 square miles) of land since it started.

Here comes the Burryman

Burryman Andrew Taylor parades through South Queensferry encased in burrs yesterday in a tradition dating back to the 17th century. Giving the burryman whisky or money is believed to attract good luck. Yesterday was Mr Taylor's final walk, concluding a 14-year tenure in the role
Picture: Jane Barlow/PA

Pension delay a 'national disgrace'

Martin Williams

MORE than 95,000 public sector pension remedy statements are still to be issued after Scotland's £1.7 billion age discrimination scandal slipped into 2028.

A circular from the Scottish Public Pensions Agency (SPPA) reveals almost 120,000 remedy statements have now been issued. The agency says around 215,000 members are ultimately eligible to receive one as the clean-up of one of Scotland's biggest public sector pension failures continues.

The disclosure means the fallout from the unlawful pension reforms exposed by the landmark McCloud court ruling will continue until the middle of 2028, almost a decade after the changes that sparked the controversy.

It comes despite assurances from the SPPA that work was progressing towards completion, with the previous expectation it would extend into 2027.

Statements are still to be issued

At the end of last October the First Minister confirmed the bulk of the work to end the delayed pension remedies scandal would continue to the end of 2026.

The Herald previously revealed how a pensioners' group threatened legal action over failures to provide remedies to thousands of public sector workers. The Pensions Ombudsman is also examining multiple complaints over the delays.

The McCloud Remedy followed a court ruling that the UK Government unlawfully discriminated against younger public sector workers through pension reforms introduced in 2015. Pension schemes have since had to recalculate benefits so eligible members can choose the pension that leaves them better off for the period between April 2015 and March 2022. Some pensioners are waiting for payments worth tens of thousands of pounds.

The agency's chief executive Stephen Pathirana confirmed it had notified the Pensions Regulator that it wanted to extend the deadline for Remedy delivery to the end of July 2028.

He said: "While we remain confident about our sustained progress towards completion, I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate my apologies to members still awaiting their Remedial Service Statements. I understand how frustrating this will be for many."

In March the agency told MSPs it "remain[s] mainly on track to meet these timelines for completion" after saying the majority of NHS cases would be completed by the end of 2026, with work extending into 2027. Now it is confirmed the NHS deadline has slipped to the end of July 2028.

Retired police superintendent Martin Gallagher, who coordinates the Job's Forgotten group campaigning for the pension remedies said it was a "national disgrace".

He added: "The SPPA has completely failed to meet their statutory responsibilities in respect of the McLeod remedy.

"Up until March 31, 2025, the statutory deadline for providing pensioners with their funds, the SPPA insisted there was no issue.

"They missed that deadline, and have gone on missing every deadline they have set for themselves since. Meanwhile tens of thousands of those who gave everything for Scotland's communities remain significantly out of pocket, altering retirement plans and not living the lives they deserve to have after their service."

The SPPA said: "Across all Remedy projects, delivery continues to progress broadly in line with the plans we have communicated."

It added: "We remain mainly on track to meet these timelines for completion."

The SPPA missed the statutory deadline of March 31 for issuing remedy statements. Campaigners say the delays have left retired workers waiting for pension payments while costing taxpayers millions of pounds in interest.

By the deadline, only around one-third of those affected had been processed, with police pensioners alone receiving around £4 million in interest payments.

A Scottish Government spokesman said: "We understand the concerns raised by individuals impacted by this situation. The McCloud Remedy is a UK-wide programme of exceptional scale and complexity, and the UK Government's original statutory timelines underestimated the challenge."

WEATHER

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24 HOUR FORECAST

General situation: A low-pressure system approaches from the north-west, bringing unsettled conditions across Scotland. Expect heavy rain in the west with strong winds. The east may see lighter showers and breezy conditions.

Outlook: Tomorrow, Scotland will experience rain and gusty winds, feeling chilly across most areas. By Monday, conditions will improve to mostly cloudy with calmer winds and a mild feel, bringing some respite from the rain.

Glasgow area and southwest Scotland: Expect overcast skies with south-west winds; light rain developing later, particularly in the south-west regions; visibility may be reduced in rain. Max temp 16-18C (61-64F). Tonight, cloudy with rain. Min temp 11-12C (52-54F).

Edinburgh area and the Borders: Cloudy skies with light south-westerly breezes; minimal chance of rain; visibility remains good throughout; mild conditions prevail. Max temp 17-19C (63-66F). Tonight, cloudy with drizzle. Min temp 12-14C (54-57F).

Fife and the Stirling, Perth and Dundee areas: Overcast skies with occasional rain showers expected, especially later. Winds from the south-west, brisk at times. Visibility may reduce in rain bands. Max temp 16-18C (61-64F). Tonight, overcast with rain. Min temp 11-12C (52-54F).

Argyll, Lochaber and the Inner Hebrides: A mild day marked by persistent rain under overcast skies. Breezy conditions prevail with winds from the southwest, maintaining a damp atmosphere. Max temp 15-16C (59-61F). Tonight, heavy overnight rain, breezy. Min temp 12-14C (54-57F).

Central Highlands: Cloudy with south-west winds, occasional rain showers likely throughout. Poor visibility in rain, cloud cover remains high with brisk winds. Max temp 13-15C (55-59F). Tonight, cloudy with light rain. Min temp 10-11C (50-52F).

Aberdeen area and the Moray Firth: A predominantly cloudy day with overcast skies and brief spells of light rain. Breezy winds from the south-west will accompany the warm conditions. Max temp 17-18C (63-64F). Tonight, warm, breezy, light rain. Min temp 12-13C (54-55F).

Northwest Highlands, Skye and Outer Hebrides: Persistent rain and overcast skies dominate the day, complemented by a breezy south-westerly wind. Despite the wet conditions, it feels mild. Max temp 14-15C (57-59F). Tonight, very heavy rain, breezy night. Min temp 11-12C (52-54F).

Caithness, Orkney and Shetland: Persistent rain dominates the day under a thick blanket of cloud. Breezy conditions from the southwest provide some movement in the otherwise mild air. Max temp 14-15C (57-59F). Tonight, mild, breezy, heavy rain. Min temp 12-13C (54-55F).

European forecast

Western Europe sees sunshine in France and the Netherlands, with clouds in Belgium. Central Europe enjoys sunny weather, though Austria faces thunderstorms. Southern Europe remains sunny. Northern Europe sees mostly cloudy conditions, except for sunny spells in Finland. Eastern Europe sees mostly sunny intervals with some areas enjoying clear skies.

Glasgow readings

The following readings were recorded at Glasgow Airport for the 24hrs ending 6pm yesterday.

Min temp: 13C (55F); Max: 18C (64F); Sun (hrs): 1.9; Barom (mb) 6am: 1004.9; 6pm: –; Rainfall (ins): 0.08

Edinburgh readings

The following readings were recorded at Edinburgh Airport for the 24hrs ending 6pm yesterday.

Min temp: 13C (55F); Max: 19C (66F); Sun (hrs): 4.6; Barom (mb) 6am: 1000.3; 6pm: –; Rainfall (ins): 0.00

UK EXTREMES

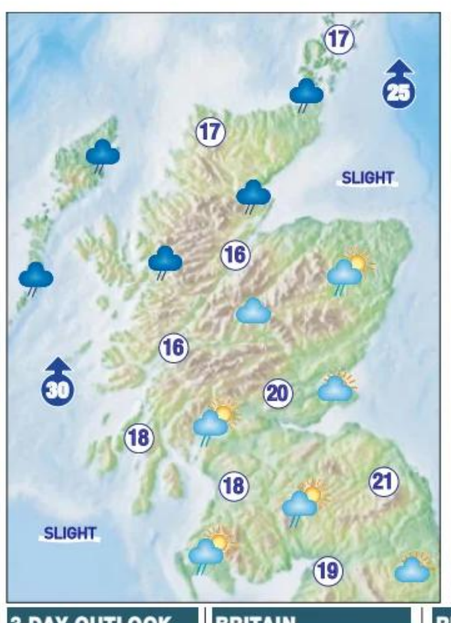
Extremes of temperature, rainfall and sunshine for 24 hours ending 11pm Thursday

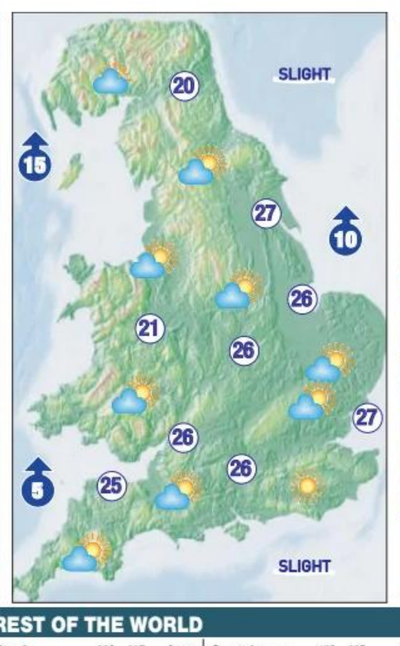
Warmest: Thorney Island, 25c.

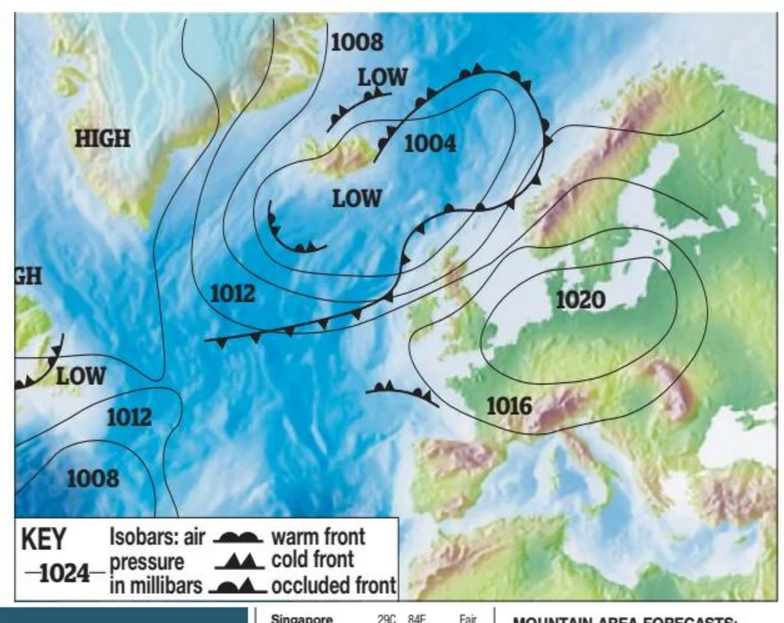
Coldest: Exeter Airport No 2, 6c.

Wettest: Stonyhurst, 8.60mm.

Sunniest: Yeovilton, 12.8hrs.







3-DAY OUTLOOK

Today

Glasgow	18C	64F	Rain
Edinburgh	20C	68F	Cloudy
Eskdalemuir	18C	64F	Rain
Aberdeen	20C	68F	Cloudy
Aviemore	18C	64F	Rain
Wick	17C	63F	Rain
Shetland	16C	61F	Rain

Tomorrow

Glasgow	17C	63F	Rain
Edinburgh	18C	64F	Rain
Eskdalemuir	18C	61F	Rain
Aberdeen	20C	68F	Rain
Aviemore	17C	63F	Rain
Wick	16C	61F	Showers
Shetland	15C	59F	Fair

Monday

Glasgow	18C	64F	Fair
Edinburgh	20C	68F	Cloudy
Eskdalemuir	18C	64F	Cloudy
Aberdeen	17C	63F	Showers
Aviemore	16C	61F	Cloudy
Wick	14C	57F	Fair
Shetland	14C	57F	Fair

BRITAIN

Aberdeen	18C	64F	Cloudy
Aviemore	17C	63F	Rain
Belfast	18C	64F	Cloudy
Birmingham	21C	70F	Fair
Brighton	25C	77F	Sunny
Bristol	20C	68F	Sunny
Cardiff	21C	70F	Fair
Carlisle	18C	64F	Fair
Edinburgh	18C	64F	Cloudy
Eskdalemuir	16C	61F	Cloudy
Glasgow	18C	64F	Cloudy
Inverness	18C	64F	Rain
Isle of Man	18C	64F	Fair
Isle of Wight	20C	68F	Sunny
Jersey	20C	68F	Sunny
Kinloss	18C	64F	Rain
Kirkwall	15C	59F	Thunder
Lerwick	13C	55F	Rain
Leuchars	19C	66F	Cloudy
Liverpool	19C	66F	Sunny
London	24C	75F	Sunny
Manchester	19C	66F	Cloudy
Newcastle	20C	68F	Cloudy
Penzance	19C	66F	Fair
Perth	18C	64F	Drizzle
Prestwick	18C	64F	Cloudy
St Andrews	19C	66F	Cloudy
Stornoway	16C	61F	Thunder
Tiree	16C	61F	Showers
Wick	16C	61F	Thunder

REST OF THE WORLD

Ajaccio	32C	90F	Sunny
Amsterdam	21C	70F	Fair
Athens	34C	93F	Fair
Atlanta	28C	82F	Cloudy
Auckland	12C	54F	Sunny
Bangkok	32C	90F	Cloudy
Barbados*	31C	88F	Sunny
Barcelona	31C	88F	Sunny
Beijing	36C	97F	Sunny
Belgrade	36C	97F	Sunny
Benidorm	32C	90F	Sunny
Berlin	20C	68F	Cloudy
Biarritz	25C	77F	Sunny
Bordeaux	29C	84F	Sunny
Boston*	29C	84F	Fair
Brisbane	22C	72F	Sunny
Brussels	22C	72F	Fair
Bucharest	32C	90F	Fair
Budapest	33C	91F	Fair
Buenos Aires*	13C	55F	Showers
Cagliari	34C	93F	Sunny
Cairo	34C	93F	Sunny
Cape Town	17C	63F	Sunny
Caracas	32C	90F	Sunny
Casablanca	28C	82F	Sunny
Chicago	26C	79F	Cloudy
Christchurch	5C	41F	Fair
Copenhagen	17C	63F	Fair
Corfu	35C	95F	Sunny
Costa Brava	32C	90F	Sunny
Crete	31C	88F	Sunny
Dubai	42C	108F	Sunny
Dublin	19C	66F	Fair
Faro	29C	84F	Sunny
Fiji	23C	73F	Cloudy
Florence	36C	97F	Sunny
Frankfurt	24C	75F	Sunny
Funchal	27C	81F	Fair
Geneva	27C	81F	Sunny
Gibraltar	27C	81F	Sunny
Helsinki	20C	68F	Thunder
Hong Kong	31C	88F	Sunny
Honolulu	29C	84F	Showers
Ibiza	31C	88F	Sunny
Istanbul	28C	82F	Sunny
Jerusalem	30C	86F	Sunny
Kolkata	27C	81F	Thunder
Kuala Lumpur	33C	91F	Fair
Kuwait City	48C	118F	Sunny
Larnaca	33C	91F	Sunny
Las Palmas	30C	86F	Sunny
Las Vegas	40C	104F	Sunny
Le Touquet	22C	72F	Fair
Lisbon	30C	86F	Sunny
Los Angeles*	25C	77F	Sunny
Luxembourg	22C	72F	Fair
Madrid	34C	93F	Sunny
Mahon	31C	88F	Sunny
Malaga	31C	88F	Sunny
Malta	34C	93F	Sunny
Manila	28C	82F	Thunder
Melbourne	14C	57F	Fair
Mexico City	23C	73F	Sunny
Miami*	33C	91F	Thunder
Milan	34C	93F	Sunny
Moscow	28C	82F	Sunny
Naples	32C	90F	Sunny
New Delhi	27C	81F	Showers
New Orleans	32C	90F	Fair
New York*	31C	88F	Fair
Nice	31C	88F	Sunny
Oslo	19C	66F	Cloudy
Palma	33C	91F	Sunny
Paris	24C	75F	Sunny
Port Stanley	2C	36F	Cloudy
Prague	24C	75F	Sunny
Reykjavik	12C	54F	Showers
Rhodes	31C	88F	Sunny
Rio de Janeiro*	32C	90F	Sunny
Rome	33C	91F	Sunny
Seoul	35C	95F	Sunny
Sicily	30C	86F	Sunny
Singapore	29C	84F	Fair
Sofia	31C	88F	Fair
St Petersburg	21C	70F	Fair
Stockholm	18C	64F	Fair
Sydney	16C	61F	Sunny
Tenerife	31C	88F	Sunny
Tokyo	32C	90F	Sunny
Toronto*	28C	82F	Fair
Tunis	36C	97F	Sunny
Venice	34C	93F	Sunny
Vienna	28C	82F	Fair
Warsaw	22C	72F	Fair
Washington*	32C	90F	Sunny
Wellington	11C	52F	Fair

Reports for noon yesterday

(*previous day in the Americas)

Tomorrow
SUN: Rises 5.36am 9.07pm
MOON: Rises 12.17am 7.53pm
LIGHTING UP: 9.07pm

HIGH WATER TOMORROW:

Aberdeen	11.01am	11.37pm
Arbroath	11.50am	-
Glasgow	10.23am	10.55pm
Greenock	9.46am	10.01pm
Leith	-	12.10pm
Mallaig	4.12am	4.35pm
Montrose	11.49am	-
Peterhead	10.29am	11.04pm
Ullapool	4.40am	5.16pm
Wick	8.45am	9.21pm

MOUNTAIN AREA FORECASTS:
http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/mountain-forecast/

If you do not have access to the internet please contact the Met Office Customer Centre for a forecast:
Tel: 0870 900 0100

SUN, MOON & TIDES

Today
SUN: Rises 5.34am 9.09pm
MOON: Rises - 6.55pm
LIGHTING UP: 9.09pm
HIGH WATER TODAY:

Aberdeen	9.33am	10.22pm
Arbroath	10.18am	11.09pm
Glasgow	7.38am	8.01pm
Greenock	7.53am	8.15pm
Leith	10.44am	11.32pm
Mallaig	2.12am	2.52pm
Montrose	10.20am	11.09pm
Peterhead	9.02am	9.47pm
Ullapool	3.15am	4.01pm
Wick	7.16am	8.04pm

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Pipers perform during a preview of the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo at Edinburgh Castle on Thursday Picture: Robert Perry/PA

I'm at the Edinburgh Tattoo for the first time – and it wasn't what I expected

Donald Erskine
At the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo

HAIRS on end. Immediately. That's the impact the drone of bagpipes has always had on me. The last time I heard them in such numbers, I was marching to a baseball park on the other side of the Atlantic – but looking on to the torchlit castle as the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo starts certainly feels different.

An ancient horn, the carnyx, bellows to start the show. The two-metre-long Celtic war horn dates back to the 4th century BC, and Diodorus Siculus, writing in 60-30 BC, described it as producing a "harsh" sound fit for the "tumult of war". It heralds the star of a 90-minute display of this year's Edinburgh Military Tattoo, titled A Call To Gather. Inspired by The Call 1914 Statue, a bronze monument which stands in West Princes Street Gardens, the show is an homage to the Scottish soldiers who answered the call to serve in the First World War.

It promises to be a showing of the coming together of nations in celebration, a welcome thought given the carnyx is not the only tumultuous sound around at the moment. Pipe bands soon emerge from Edinburgh Castle's fiery maw and form Celtic-shaped swirls below the ramparts to a backdrop of fireworks and a lightshow fit to make any pop star jealous.

After being cancelled in 2025 due to Storm Floris – the first weather-related call-off in the event's history – this year's show brings together more than 800 performers from across the globe, including performers from Qatar, New Zealand, America and Germany.

It's my first time at the Tattoo, and the start was exactly what I'd expected – the hairs-on-end-inducing stuff.

As the drone filled the air in the cauldron of sound created by the temporary stands on the Esplanade, it transported me back to my time at the World Cup. All at once, I'm en route to Fenway Park in Boston, marching with the Tartan Army to Highland Cathedral. An unforgettable memory, where I'm overcome with emotion.

The breeze lifts its head above the torchlit castle and into the stands, and the drop in temperature ensures my daydream of soaring temperatures across the pond comes to an abrupt halt.

It's a good job it does, as the swell of passion and pride rises with the cacophony of noise from the bands as the Skye Boat Song is played for the first of several run-outs during the evening.

Straight away, the brilliance of the performance shines, the light show working perfectly with the millimetre-perfect marching which sees line after line of performers pass through each other at impressive speeds and angles.

There's a shift that comes, and one that I'd heard whispers of before the show, that they'd been ambitious in creating more of a "theatre" show in place of something more traditional.

Having only seen the snippets and snapshots of previous years, I can't say if there was a difference – but at points it did feel slightly uneven. Certain numbers are there for a clap-along, feelgood element that feels separate to the show's message.

At one point, The New Zealand Army Band's Haka Kamate (a brilliant moment) is preceded by a Cuban-influenced opera number, Habanera, and The Lord of the Rings' The Fighting Uruk-Hai, a theme for the dark side of that story seems an odd choice. And it is followed by Elton John's Saturday Night's Alright for Fighting.

In another segment, the United States Army Field Band whips out Ennio Morricone's The Ecstasy of Gold, followed by a medley of Michael Jackson and other pop royalty. There's also a full country section, with cowboy-hatted dancers choreographed to pipers in a ceilidh, and a section which sees Marvel's Avengers Assemble theme play. It feels rather cabaret at times, albeit undoubtedly entertaining.

You nearly forget there's anything military about it all until three Union flag-decaled jet flags flap through the band.

There's a deafening silence as God Save the King is played – I'm reminded of the passion in the roar of Flower of Scotland at the World Cup, and realise I've only ever heard the British national anthem in person in Scotland when the national side last played England.

A "sit doon" order is barked by compere Richard Rankin to a small giggle after the anthem. He's been captivating, depicted as the soldier from the Call Statue throughout, narrating and guiding the audience around the globe.

It's the quieter moments, tender in among the rest, that really shine for me: a lone sword dancer holding the audience in the palm of their hand, the lone piper atop the ramparts, and other moments that draw the audience in and leave them in stunned silence before rapturous applause ensues.

Another highlight was a medley of contemporary Scottish music numbers that felt right.

You cannot fault the performers or the performances – it's breathtaking entertainment and undeniably beautiful to watch. But if looked at as a celebration of every nation's culture, I don't know if it quite hits that mark.

Are they celebrating tradition and culture, rooting the show in that, or grasping at a young, modern audience? Or simply falling in the muddled middle ground? I fear the latter. The cover versions are pulled off with aplomb – that's undeniable – but there's plenty to see in the city at this time of year of that ilk. Some things must move with the times, but should the Tattoo?

Leaving on to the Royal Mile, blooming as always in August, there's chatter and gunpowder residue in the air from the fireworks. With the Tattoo seemingly gearing up to tour "across other parts of the world", according to the programme, the blending of cultures will hopefully continue. I just wish they'd let those individual cultures shine a bit more.

The Tartan Army march in Boston at the World Cup

Highland dancers at the preview

New Zealand Army Band members perform

Acclaimed producer who worked with Madonna and Blur dies

GRAMMY Award-winning producer William Orbit has died aged 69, his family and friends announced.

A statement posted to his Instagram page said the London-born musician had died at home in July.

The statement read: "It is with profound sadness that the family and friends of William Orbit announce that William passed away at home on July 23, 2026.

"We are deeply saddened by his passing. He will be greatly missed by us and by so many whose lives he touched through his music, friendship and kindness."

Orbit produced Madonna's 1998 album Ray Of Light, which saw the American singer move into electronica and trip hop, and also worked with her on the 2000 album Music, as well as co-writing and performing on her 1999 UK number two single Beautiful Stranger.

Ray Of Light saw Orbit pick up two Grammys for best pop album and best dance recording, while he also won one for best song written for visual media for Beautiful Stranger, which appeared in the 1999 film Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me.

William Orbit

He was also nominated for Grammys for his work on Pink's song Feel Good Time, his own 2000 album Pieces In A Modern Style and for record of the year for Ray Of Light.

With Blur, Orbit produced the 1999 album 13, which saw the band take a darker lyrical turn and produced singles such as Tender, Coffee & TV and No Distance Left To Run, and also worked on their track Sweet Song from 2003's Think Tank album.

He also worked on Mel C's 1999 debut solo album Northern Star and, in 2018, he worked on After All, a song from British girl group All Saints' fifth studio album, Testament.

The former Spice Girls singer paid tribute to Orbit, posting on Instagram: "Such an honour to have worked with this great man. Sending all my love."

Orbit also worked with Britney Spears and Will.i.am on the 2013 album Britney Jean, and produced a 2014 version of the Freddie Mercury solo track There Must Be More to Life Than This which featured Michael Jackson using archive vocals, and Queen.

For Irish rock band U2, Orbit produced two songs in Electrical Storm and The Hands That Built America which were the only previously unreleased tracks to feature on their compilation The Best Of 1990-2000.

Nicole Appleton of All Saints paid tribute to Orbit on Instagram, writing: "We were fortunate enough to work with him on many occasions and on many songs.

"In the studio, he made me feel so confident, comfortable and always brought the best out in me.

"He was a treasure in the music industry and we had the most amazing times in the studio and socially. We will forever celebrate him as a music icon. Sending love to all his friends and family."

Also paying tribute to Orbit was fellow producer Erol Alkan, who posted: "Incredible producer. Made so many records I love. My sincerest condolences."

Orbit had a solo career which produced 12 studio albums, largely of electronic music, and was also a member of the groups Bassomatic and Torch Song.

He and Madonna worked together again in 2012 when he produced six tracks on her MDNA album.

Whisky Week returns with 50 venues

WHISKY Week is returning with a packed programme of tastings, tours and exclusive drams across Aberdeen, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Running from August 20 to September 13, the festival will transform more than 50 venues into what organisers describe as Scotland's biggest whisky trail.

Bars and venues will partner with distilleries and whisky brands to host a rolling programme of events. Each venue will offer an exclusive festival menu, with at least one dram priced at £5 or less.

Festival wristband holders will also gain access to exclusive tastings, tours and whisky experiences.

Whisky Week is in Aberdeen from August 20 to 30, Glasgow from August 27 to September 6, and Edinburgh between September 3 and 13.

Participating venues include The Pot Still, Teuchters Bar, The Black Cat, The Grill, The Tippling House and Aberdeen Whisky Shop.

Festival partners include Glenfiddich, Springbank, Glengoyne, Glen Moray, Kingsbarns, Kilchoman and Caol Ila, alongside a growing line-up of independent producers.

Gregor Sey, co-founder of Whisky Week, said: "Whisky Week was built around a simple idea: people we like, in places we like, with a drink we love.

"Whether you're a lifelong whisky enthusiast or trying your first dram, Whisky Week is about discovering something new, supporting brilliant venues and enjoying great whisky in great company."

Hippo named Piper

EDINBURGH Zoo's newest pygmy hippo calf has been named Piper following her first health check.

The one-week-old female, born to parents Otto and Gloria on July 31, is being cared for by her mother.

During her first examination, staff weighed Piper, gave her a warm bath, carried out a full body check, and examined her gums and teeth.

The calf weighs just under 5.5kg but is expected to grow quickly.

Gloria has successfully raised two previous calves – Amara, born in 2021, and Haggis, born in 2024.

Hippo keeper Jade Robertson said staff chose Piper as a name "because she's like a little bagpipe, always making cute little huffs and puffs".

Cliff Lyons Dobbie has links to Glasgow

Warning to public as rapist on the run

Gaby McKay

A MAN who raped a 10-year-old girl has absconded after being let out for community leave in Perth.

Cliff Lyons Dobbie has been detained at Carstairs since 1990 after he raped the girl in Glasgow.

The girl was taking a shortcut to her grandmother's house when he attacked her in a field near his home in Drumchapel.

Dobbie was on bail at the time for another sex offence, having molested a 12-year-old boy in a field after forcing him to strip.

Police said the restricted patient was on escorted community leave in Perth when he escaped.

He was last seen wearing white trainers, light blue ripped jeans, a salmon-coloured golf shirt and a light blue jumper.

He also wore a black cap and thick black-rimmed glasses and was carrying a black backpack and a black puffer jacket.

He has distinctive tattoos on both arms, including two blue tiger-like eyes on his right arm and a blue and red Rangers tattoo on his left arm.

He speaks with a strong Glaswegian accent.

Police Inspector Kris McCall said: "We want to trace Cliff, who also uses the name Clifford Lyons or Dobbie, as quickly as possible.

"He has links to Glasgow and the surrounding areas.

"The public should not approach him but should report any sighting to police."

Streeting: UK must be vigilant over Russia

THE UK is "more than capable" of dealing with the threat posed by Vladimir Putin's Russia despite daily attempts at intimidation or provocation, Defence Secretary Wes Streeting said as he visited Scotland.

He said Russia's activities showed why increased military and security spending was necessary and it was important for the public to understand "why we are so vigilant".

Speaking during a visit to Babcock in Rosyth dockyard, Fife, where he received a briefing on the Type 31 frigate programme, Mr Streeting said: "Every day we are dealing with attempts by Russia to intimidate or provoke the UK and our allies.

"And we have seen – whether through Russian aircraft buzzing our airspace or ships in the Channel, the scouting of underwater cables – visible examples of what we are dealing with throughout the year.

"We've got some of the best security and intelligence services in the world, I would argue the best. So we are more than capable of dealing with any sorts of threats Russia would send our way."

Chancellor John Healey quit as defence secretary in protest at a lack of cash for defence, saying a target of spending 3% of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2030 must be set.

Mr Streeting said Mr Healey would set out the "interim path" to 3% as part of the Nato commitment to 3.5% by 2035.

Glasgow secures £3.44 million to lead city-wide fight against gambling harm

MORE than £3.44 million has now been successfully awarded to Glasgow City Council in a bid to deliver a city-wide public-health response to gambling harm.

The money will be granted to the local authority over the next three years to help IT deliver "The Glasgow Project" which has already made significant progress in addressing gambling harm by raising awareness of the issue, reducing stigma and promoting education and peer-led initiatives.

It comes after the UK Government confirmed in 2024 that it would bring forward a statutory levy on gambling operators to generate £100m for research, prevention and treatment on gambling harm.

A report presented to members of the wellbeing committee next week highlights how the previous Glasgow Gambling Harms Group worked collaboratively to develop a whole system approach to reduce gambling harms – known as "The Glasgow Project".

This was supported by three years of funding from the UK Gambling Commission settlement and Public Health Scotland (PHS).

The new award now enables partners to build on the previous work.

It will fund a multi-agency partnership and team to provide gambling harm education in schools and youth services, support for young people affected by gambling-related debt, workforce training across healthcare, community and public services, and investment in three neighbourhoods with the highest density of gambling outlets.

Glasgow already has more bookmakers than anywhere else in the UK outside of London.

So far, priorities for 2026-27 include recruitment to the prevention team, the re-establishment of the Multi-Agency Gambling Harms Partnership Group and developing a specialist financial inclusion service for those financially harmed by gambling.

A report being presented to members next week states: "The Gambling Levy funding will enable and support the re-establishment of a Glasgow Project Partnership – one that is collaborative, informed by lived experience, and rooted in public health principles."

The report adds: "Many of the other fund recipients across Scotland will seek to include Glasgow in their developments, which will be co-ordinated through the re-established partnership."

Why Scots law is a grey area when you are filmed using smart glasses

Hannah Brown

AS camera-equipped glasses make it easier to record strangers without their knowledge, a Scottish academic says the law has yet to catch up with social-media creators who turn footage into income.

Smart glasses can turn an ordinary encounter into viral social-media content before the person being filmed realises a camera is present.

As covert recordings of people circulate online, questions are being asked on whether Scotland's laws offer meaningful protection and what, if anything, the Scottish Parliament can do.

Smart glasses have exposed a legal grey area, according to a data protection expert.

UK rules do not clearly distinguish between private social-media use and creators who profit from covert footage of identifiable strangers.

Judith Rauhofer, senior lecturer in IT law at the University of Edinburgh, told The Herald that existing rules could potentially apply when creators record identifiable people and publish the footage through revenue-generating social-media accounts.

However, the courts have not definitively settled the point at which social-media activity stops being a private pastime and becomes a commercial operation.

Ms Rauhofer said there was "a fine line to be drawn here" but "it's not one that has been drawn yet".

She said: "Is this really a private matter if I upload what I filmed with my glasses onto my Instagram, or is this something I specifically do to make money? In which case, really, it should be covered by the GDPR [General Data Protection Regulation]."

Her assessment of what Holyrood could do to change data-protection law was blunt.

Asked what the Scottish Parliament could do to strengthen safeguards against the abusive use of smart glasses, she said: "Next to nothing on the data protection side, I'm afraid."

That does not mean Scotland is entirely powerless.

Data protection is reserved to Westminster, but civil and criminal law are largely devolved. Scotland's common law of delict – broadly equivalent to tort law elsewhere in the UK – can also raise questions of privacy.

Ms Rauhofer stressed she was speaking as a data-protection specialist rather than an expert in Scots privacy law, but she said the Scottish Government "may have more possibilities in shaping the situation" through the separate field of privacy delict.

Holyrood cannot rewrite the UK GDPR or take control of its enforcement. It could, however, consider whether Scotland needs clearer civil remedies, stronger court powers or a narrowly drawn criminal-law response to particularly harmful forms of covert filming.

Meta chief executive Mark Zuckerberg shows off smart glasses

Why has the issue arisen now?

The debate has intensified after police began assessing videos recorded by TikToker Scott Margerison during a road trip around Scotland.

Mr Margerison used camera-equipped Meta glasses to film the public, shop workers and ferry staff, apparently without their knowledge. Police said complaints had been received and footage was being reviewed to establish whether any criminality was involved.

The footage reportedly included sexualised comments about young women, confrontations with people and an encounter with a Sikh shopkeeper who said she cried after discovering that a secretly recorded exchange had been published.

Caledonian MacBrayne also paused visits to the bridge of its MV Loch Seaforth ferry after learning staff had been filmed in a restricted area where recording and photography had been prohibited.

Smart glasses resemble conventional spectacles but contain cameras and microphones. Unlike somebody visibly holding up a phone, the wearer can record at eye level while giving people around them little obvious indication that an encounter is being captured.

The technology has raised particular concerns over women's safety. Its discreet design can leave women unaware an interaction is being recorded, sexualised or prepared for publication.

The concern is especially acute for women in public-facing roles, who may be unable to leave an uncomfortable encounter and are often expected to remain polite and professional while it unfolds.

> "There is no single Scottish law that specifically bans smart glasses

There is no single Scottish law that specifically bans smart glasses.

Whether their use is lawful depends on the circumstances and may engage several different areas of law.

Is data-protection law enough?

Ms Rauhofer said the existence of legal protections was only part of the question.

"There are essentially two questions to ask," she said. "One is: is the law sufficient? The other is: is it sufficiently enforced?

"Even if it is the best law in the world, if it isn't properly enforced, then it's not going to protect anyone."

Under UK GDPR, recording, storing, editing and publishing footage of an identifiable person may constitute the processing of personal data. Where the legislation applies, the person using the footage must have a valid legal basis for doing so.

Activity carried out purely for personal or household purposes can be exempt. That allows people to take family photographs and make ordinary personal social-media posts without taking on the full responsibilities of a data controller.

The grey area emerges when the same platforms and recording tools are used to build audiences and generate income.

Ms Rauhofer said: "I think there is an argument to be made because the household exception is really supposed to protect sort of family situations, you know, personal and family situations, and I think a content creator who specifically has a social media account as a revenue stream, you know, this is your job."

The legal framework was developed before influencing became a major commercial industry. Smart glasses do not necessarily create an entirely new legal question, but they sharpen the uncertainty over where private use ends and professional content creation begins.

Does the wearer need consent?

Not necessarily. Ms Rauhofer said there was a widespread misconception that consent was required for every use of personal data.

"There is a really widely held misconception in the general population, I think, that someone needs consent for every use of somebody else's personal data," she said. "That's not true."

Consent is one possible legal basis. But somebody recording and publishing footage may instead seek to rely on "legitimate interests", which requires the purpose of the recording to be balanced against the rights and freedoms of the person filmed.

An investigative journalist exposing wrongdoing could have a strong public-interest justification for recording without warning.

The position may be harder to defend where an unsuspecting worker or stranger is provoked, embarrassed or sexualised primarily to generate entertainment, engagement or income.

Social media has also blurred the distinction between professional journalism, citizen journalism and influencing.

"The line between an accredited journalist and the new type of citizen journalist is a very fine one," said Ms Rauhofer. "There is a journalistic interest that would be classified as a legitimate interest and, therefore, to what extent can anyone who does stuff on the internet claim that? That's definitely one of the questions we probably need to have answered."

Have smart glasses overtaken the law?

"The law grinds very slowly. Technology develops really, really quickly," Ms Rauhofer said.

But she cautioned against assuming every new device required a new statute.

The GDPR was designed in technology-neutral terms, while its definition of processing covers activities including collecting, storing, disclosing and deleting information.

"GDPR, in particular, was designed to be technology neutral, so it wasn't made with specific technologies in mind," she said. "I don't think that it is a new legal question."

The uncertainty is instead about whether the law applies in a particular case, whether an exemption can be claimed and whether the creator has a valid legal basis for using the footage.

Smart glasses may therefore be exposing weaknesses already present in the system: unclear boundaries, limited public awareness and the difficulty of enforcing rights before footage spreads.

What can Scotland do?

On data protection, very little. Responsibility for the law and its enforcement sits at UK level. Scotland's Information Commissioner deals with freedom-of-information law, while data protection is enforced by the UK Information Commissioner's Office.

A Scottish Government spokesman said: "We keep the law under review to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

"More generally, filming and publishing footage of individuals without their consent can raise privacy concerns and, depending on the circumstances, legal issues. It is important people are aware when footage intended for publication is being recorded and are able to make an informed choice about whether they wish to participate or not."

UNSPUN: Scotland and the threat of spy glasses Page 19

Michael Marra is in the running to be Scottish Labour leader

Scottish Labour frontrunner accused of staff sacking plot

Continued from Page 1

elected leader." He suggested the claims were being used by opponents to "score political points during the heightened emotion of a leadership campaign".

Daniel Johnson MSP, who has backed Mr Marra for leader, said the claims were "not only untrue" but "an irresponsible attempt to exploit a very sensitive employment situation", pointing to reduced short money for staffing following the election.

"Labour MSPs are collective employers of these vital and important staff members," he said. "Whoever is briefing this is not only not telling the truth, they are not upholding their responsibilities as an employer."

Pauline McNeill and Tracy Gilbert, co-chairs of Mr Marra's campaign, added: "Emotions will always run high during leadership contests but we need to see much better conduct than anonymous briefings using staff for political point scoring."

No single MSP has the power to cut staff numbers, and the party's support unit, which had 12.6 full-time equivalent posts after the election, has since shrunk to nine through voluntary redundancies unrelated to the post-election discussion.

The row comes as leadership candidates faced questions at a Unison-hosted hustings yesterday.

South Scotland MSP Joe Fagan has also secured enough backing from MPs and MSPs to stand and is expected to win over trade unions, while Glasgow MSP Monica Lennon is seeking the support of one more MP and MSP to join the race. If Mr Marra fails to secure the support of two trade unions before August 17, it could pave the way for a coronation for Joe Fagan, who is rumoured to be the "Jackie Baillie candidate" preference.

Ms Lennon has the backing of unions but needs another MP and MSP to back her before the deadline if she is to make the leadership ballot.

Unison Scotland – the largest public sector union – confirmed it was backing Ms Lennon for leader.

The contest was triggered by the resignation of Anas Sarwar who is taking up a junior ministerial brief in Andy Burnham's government and taking a seat in the House of Lords.

Glasgow School of Art records Scotland's highest retention rate for students

Rose Moncur

THE Glasgow School of Art (GSA) has recorded the highest student retention rate in Scotland, according to figures from the Scottish Funding Council.

The latest Widening Access report found 97% of students from the country's most deprived communities continued their studies at the school.

The report also found 22.9% of GSA's 2024-25 intake came from the 20% most deprived areas, exceeding the national widening access target set for 2030.

The Commission On Widening Access aims for 20% of university entrants to come from the country's most deprived backgrounds by the end of the decade.

GSA has met or exceeded that target every year since 2019-20.

The art school also ranked second in Scotland for graduation outcomes, with 20.9% of graduates in 2024-25 coming from the most deprived areas – almost seven percentage points above the Scottish university average of 13.8%.

The GSA said its results reflect a range of widening access initiatives, including its National Schools Programme, a 15-week portfolio preparation course for secondary pupils, and progression partnerships with Glasgow Clyde College and Forth Valley College.

The Widening Access report measures universities' progress towards creating a more inclusive higher education sector.

Founded in 1845, the GSA is recognised internationally for visual creative education and is ranked eighth in the world and fifth in Europe in the 2026 World University Rankings.

Professor Penny Macbeth, director and principal of GSA, said: "These figures are a powerful testament to the talent that exists in every community in Scotland.

"At the GSA, we have shown for over five years now that when you open doors to students from the most deprived backgrounds, they don't just succeed – they lead.

"A 97% retention rate for students from our most disadvantaged areas, alongside exceeding our access target again, sends a clear message that excellence and opportunity go hand in hand."

Shona Paul, head of professional and continuing education at GSA, said: "We believe everyone should be able to fulfil their creative potential.

"The success of this commitment is reflected not only in the GSA surpassing the Scottish Government's 20% by 2030 target since 2019, widening access at the point of entry – we are sustaining that access right through to graduation.

"Being ranked first in Scotland for retention and second for those graduating shows our support systems, from contextual admissions through to student support, are working."

Councillors demand review of tram storage facilities as services hit until August 26

Exclusive
Josh Pizzuto-Pomaco

EDINBURGH council leaders have been urged to build additional storage facilities for trams in the north of the city, following weeks of transport disruption.

Trams continue to be blocked from travelling along Princes Street following the fire in the former Debenhams store, affecting businesses along Leith Walk and north to Newhaven.

At the time of the blaze, which happened overnight on July 9, the entire trams fleet was stabled at the Gogar depot, in south-west Edinburgh.

Conservative councillor Jo Mowat told The Herald she was not sure why plans to build additional stabling facilities in Newhaven had been shelved.

"A council report [in April 2024] talked about de-scoping landscaping to allow for possible stabling, so the assumption must be that stabling was going to be built," Ms Mowat said.

"My question is, and I have written a motion for next full council asking this, is who took and when was the decision taken to not provide stabling and what risk assessment and contingency planning was done before this decision was taken."

The aforementioned council report states: "Newhaven tram stop... has been de-scoped to allow possible future tram stabling to be installed by Edinburgh Trams. This area will be seeded."

Furthermore, according to the council's 2019 full business case for the Trams To Newhaven project, the local authority had agreed to terms with Forth Ports to secure land on which to build the facilities.

"Additional stabling is provided at Newhaven," a technical note published in July 2025 confirms. "It is understood this allows for overnight stabling of three tram sets (including use of the tram stop). It should be noted this facility does not enable preparation of trams prior to launch.

Trams can't currently run beyond Edinburgh's west end

"This means that whilst trams can be parked at Newhaven, they still need to return to the main depot for full operational preparation before beginning passenger services."

Councillor Kevin Lang, of the Liberal Democrats, told The Herald council officers must draw up "better resilience plans" for the trams network to deal with future incidents.

He said: "We were told trams were the answer to Edinburgh transport's problems. Yet a single fire in a single building and in a single part of the city has resulted in the complete loss of services across Leith Walk, Leith and Newhaven. We can't consider this acceptable, especially at the height of the festival season.

"Once the site is made safe and Princes Street re-opened, the council must undertake a comprehensive review of the civil contingency and business continuity plans.

"That review needs to include better resilience plans for Edinburgh's trams, including how alternative stabling and maintenance facilities can be made available to reduce the reliance on Gogar."

Similarly, Ms Mowat told The Herald: "I would be supportive of stabling or a depot in the east/north of the city.

"The way trams run is that there is a period of non-running on the track to allow for maintenance and a depot/stabling in the east of the city would allow for later finish and earlier start for trams rather than them all having to start and finish in Gogar, which would improve service for users."

Plans to move the trams to the north of the city via lorry or slowly creep them past the fire-damaged building in Princes Street have been ruled out, which means no trams are expected to run beyond the west end until at least August 26.

Transport and environment convener Councillor Stephen Jenkinson said council officials had been "working tirelessly" alongside Edinburgh Trams and Lothian Buses staff over the last month.

He said: "I appreciate how disruptive this has been, and I would like to thank our transport providers and their staff for their continued efforts, as well as everyone affected for their patience and understanding.

"This was an exceptional situation, but it has highlighted the importance of ensuring our trams' network has the operational resilience and flexibility it needs to continue providing a reliable service when unexpected events occur."

Mr Jenkinson confirmed the council will work with the trams operator to consider operational arrangements and lessons learned "once the immediate response and recovery operation has concluded".

He added: "This will include considering tram stabling, access to essential maintenance facilities and how we can provide greater flexibility in the way the network operates during periods of disruption."

'Petty party politics' claim in row over city funding

THE SNP has hit back at Edinburgh City Council's leader amid an intensifying row over the allocation of £5 million by the Scottish Government following the Princes Street fire.

Four weeks after the blaze at 109-112 Princes Street, Deputy First Minister Jenny Gilruth met city chief Jane Meagher, a Scottish Labour councillor, to confirm the funding package.

However, speaking to reporters after Ms Gilruth's departure on Wednesday afternoon, Ms Meagher accused government ministers of favouring Glasgow over Edinburgh for political reasons.

In response, SNP council group leader Lesley Macinnes slated the Labour administration's "chaotic response" to the funding acknowledgement and said discussions had been going on behind the scenes for several weeks.

She said: "On the one hand the council leader has thanked the Deputy First Minister for a constructive meeting on Wednesday and the fully funded support package but, on the other, immediately made an unfounded assertion that the SNP-led Scottish Government cares less about Edinburgh than Glasgow and that is it all down to political bias against Edinburgh in favour of Glasgow.

"The council leader, recently returning from holiday, has complained it took too long to set up a meeting, that she felt ignored by the First Minister after she wrote to him and that somehow this is all the fault of the big, bad SNP.

"At a time when we should all be concentrating on working together to achieve the very best outcomes for the city's residents and businesses, she has instead put petty party politics at the top of her agenda." The Herald understands a formal letter requesting aid was sent from Ms Meagher's office to First Minister John Swinney on July 17, eight days after the fire.

Speaking on Wednesday afternoon, Ms Meagher said: "I'm extremely disappointed the First Minister chose not to respond. Edinburgh is the capital city. Edinburgh, equally importantly, is a driver of the Scottish economy.

"I think it's a disappointing signifier of the esteem, if you like, or the importance that Edinburgh has over Glasgow. And it's hard not to think it might be political."

Asked to clarify what she meant, the Labour councillor said: "Well, if you look at where the support for the Scottish National Party lies, I think that answers your question."

After a serious fire in Union Street, Glasgow, in March, ministers announced a £10m funding pot within a week. By contrast, the government did not publicly comment on the Princes Street fire until July 28, 19 days after the incident.

Ms Meagher added: "I'm disappointed Glasgow seems to be more highly valued in a sense than we are. But we are where we are. I'm grateful we've got some money and we'll use it to serve the city of Edinburgh."

However, Ms Macinnes rejected those claims.

She said: "The council leader... called the government response 'shameful'. Perhaps her administration should look at themselves in the mirror. While council officers and engineers and those on the fire site are working as fast as they can to secure the site and re-open Princes Street, Labour councillors showing vacant leadership are reducing this to pathetic squabbling."

JOSH PIZZUTO-POMACO

COMMENT AT HERALDSCOTLAND.COM

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Corbyn to take part in Scottish festival

FORMER Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn is to appear at the Beyond Borders International Festival later this month.

Mr Corbyn will join a line-up of politicians, journalists, historians and cultural figures at Traquair House as the festival returns with a programme exploring diplomacy, democracy and identity.

Mr Corbyn will take part in a News Review alongside BBC journalist Kirsty Lang before leading a poetry walk through the grounds of Traquair.

The programme also features former first minister Nicola Sturgeon and BBC chief international correspondent Lyse Doucet.

One of the headline events will see BBC journalist Anita Anand join former UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs Martin Griffiths and Doucet to discuss her book The Finest Hotel in Kabul before leading a separate conversation on diplomacy.

Other talks will discuss the war in Afghanistan, global justice and international diplomacy.

Away from the talks, the Walled Garden will host live music, storytelling walks and cultural performances, including a set from emerging Scottish folk artist Miwa Nagato-Apthorp.

The festival was founded by Mark Muller Stuart KC and is held in the grounds of Scotland's oldest inhabited house.

The full festival programme is available online.

Mr Muller Stuart said: "If you're interested in what's going on in Britain and the world today you can't beat this year's programme.

"It's packed full of the most interesting people all ready to share their ideas and experiences with the people of Scotland.

"So enjoy Traquair for a day, and share a wee dram in the walled garden with our participants."

Probe into Minnie 'data breach'

A HEALTH board is investigating claims staff accessed the medical records of a nine-year-old girl allegedly murdered in Arbroath.

Minnie Merriman, from West Yorkshire, was found on Monday at the Elliot industrial estate in the Angus town while her family were camping in the area.

She was taken to Ninewells Hospital in Dundee, where she later died.

Her father Christopher Rice, 35, was later charged with her murder.

The Scottish Sun has reported the hospital is investigating claims staff accessed Minnie's medical records without clinical need or permission.

A spokesperson for NHS Tayside said they were investigating the circumstances of an alleged data breach. The spokesperson said: "As a matter of governance, any data protection breach would be recorded and investigated by NHS Tayside and, where appropriate, reported to the Information Commissioner's Office.

"It would not be appropriate for us to comment further on individual staffing matters."

During a hearing at Forfar Sheriff Court on Wednesday, Rice did not enter a plea and was committed for further examination and remanded in custody.

Nationwide installs life-saving defibrillators at 15 branches across Scotland

Rose Moncur

LIFE-SAVING defibrillators and bleed-control kits have been installed at 15 Nationwide branches across Scotland.

The equipment has been fitted as part of the building society's commitment to install emergency equipment at all 605 of its UK branches by the end of the year, in what is believed to be the country's largest combined rollout of its kind.

The publicly accessible defibrillators and bleed-control kits are available 24 hours a day where possible and are housed in external cabinets to ensure they can be accessed quickly during an emergency.

Virgin Money branches are also set to take part in the programme.

The initiative is being delivered in partnership with Visa, while St John Ambulance is providing life-saving training for Nationwide staff and local communities.

Employees across Nationwide's Scottish branches have the opportunity to complete first aid training covering CPR, the use of defibrillators and responding to severe bleeding incidents. The organisation is also supporting community training through volunteer-led "Heart of Community" sessions, helping more people develop the confidence to respond in an emergency.

Since the UK-wide rollout began in June, 48 of the newly installed defibrillators have already been used.

Scottish branches now equipped with the devices include East Kilbride, Glenrothes, Shawlands, Ayr, Livingston, Paisley, Rosyth, Motherwell, Irvine, Kilmarnock, Dumfries, Galashiels, Perth, St Andrews and Stirling.

Mandy Beech, director of retail services at Nationwide, said: "Our research shows people in Scotland value having local access to life-saving equipment, but many wouldn't feel confident using it in an emergency.

"That's why we're not just installing defibrillators and bleed kits. Every Nationwide branch colleague in Scotland has the opportunity to receive first-aid training, and we're working with St John Scotland to help more people gain the skills that could help save a life."

Professor Andrew Hartle, chief medical officer at St John Ambulance, said: "Every minute counts in an emergency, and having access to a defibrillator or bleed control kit can make a vital difference before the ambulance service arrives.

"By increasing the availability of this life-saving equipment and giving more people the confidence to use it, we can help communities be better prepared to respond when it matters most.

"We're proud to be working with Nationwide and Visa on an initiative that is helping put the power of first aid into more people's hands."

Tattoo to build on 'Outlander effect' with worldwide events

Continued from Page 1

the annual show in Edinburgh and occasional visits to Australia and New Zealand.

The plans, revealed as this year's show opens in Edinburgh, have been in development since the Tattoo hired Alan Lane, an experienced theatre producer, as its new creative director two years ago.

The Tattoo has already held workshops with leading Scottish traditional musicians as part of the development process, including its first indoor productions.

Tattoo chief executive Jason Barrett has suggested the Tattoo wants to create a Scottish equivalent of the long-running Irish dance spectacular Riverdance.

A key priority of the Tattoo strategy is taking new incarnations of the event to North America, which is already the biggest market for overseas ticket sales for the event which has been running at Edinburgh Castle esplanade since 1950.

Mr Barrett said the Tattoo wanted to build on the "Outlander effect", which has seen interest in Scottish history and culture rise since the hit TV show was launched more than a decade ago, and the success of the Tartan Army's takeover of Boston during the World Cup.

Mr Barrett told The Herald: "Our plans are developing and we are investing in them.

"Our dream is to go abroad and do a version of the Edinburgh show in stadiums, as we have done in Australia and New Zealand, also do a small version of the show in arenas, perhaps in North America, and then do a version of the Tattoo, a bit like Riverdance, in theatres.

"The challenge to the team is for us to develop all three, and make them repeatable and programmable.

"It is not good enough for us just to do them once. It is about doing them sustainably. I think that is what success will look like for the Tattoo in future.

"I have challenged the team to try something new. I am an entrepreneur by background.

"We are being ambitious, but that is how companies scale up. It is about growing, bringing in talent at all levels, working with more partners abroad who can help promote and produce our shows. We have plans to do all of that."

Performers at a Tattoo performance in Sydney in 2019 Picture: Brendon Thorne/Getty Images

Mr Lane told The Herald: "We are really excited about what we are doing.

"We are working on a number of stage shows and a number of arena shows. They are all constantly evolving.

"We are currently making different shows on different scales for different continents.

"We are working with some of Scotland's best artists. There is extraordinary talent and we have a huge resource base.

"We are working on four or five different shows, but that is no different from any great theatre company.

> "Our dream is to go abroad and do a version of the Edinburgh show in stadiums

"We are a performance powerhouse and I think we are increasingly being understood as a great performance company. I would expect us to be making shows on a number of continents."

Mr Barrett said Australia and New Zealand were part of the future plans for the Tattoo.

He said: "We were in Australia and New Zealand earlier this year. We are already in conversations with the folks down there to come back in 2029. As far as the arena proposition is concerned, we are currently in discussions with producers and booking agents in North America.

"The one thing about that market is that although people have heard of the Tattoo they don't really know what it is.

"But I would expect, if everything goes right, that we might be able to make an entry into that market sometime in 2028. We have some ground to make up in terms of educating them.

"The same thing goes for the stage proposition. We are developing that at the moment and looking at where the interest might be. I hope that would happen in 2028 or 2029.

"We want to put dates out there so we can drive towards something, but we don't want to rush things.

"But it is about getting the products ready and closing the awareness gap about the Tattoo, rather than tying ourselves to dates when we are not ready.

"Some things may not work out, but that is not going to stop us from trying."

Mr Lane insisted the annual event in Edinburgh, which attracts an overall audience of 230,000 to the castle esplanade, would always be the "beating heart" of the Tattoo company.

New innovations this year included bringing in Outlander and Rebus star Richard Rankin as a guest narrator for the event, and working with the leading trad bands Skipinnish, Tide Lines and Skerryvore on a special sequence showcasing their music.

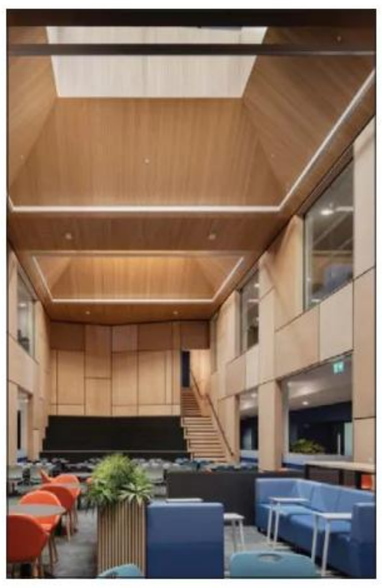
Other tracks featured in the show include Motown classics I Want You Back and Dancing in the Streets, Saturday Night's Alright For Fighting by Elton John, Frank Sinatra's My Way, and country music hit The Devil Went Down to Georgia.

Mr Lane added: "I think the Tattoo is the greatest show in Britain, if not the world.

"Our job is to understand where we have come from, honour that and make a new show for audiences every single year.

"That is a wonderful challenge. We have an unbelievable loyal and passionate audience and they keep coming back."

Inside the new £85.5m Paisley Grammar School campus opening this month



Some 1,350 pupils will attend the newly built Paisley school

Rose Moncur

A NEW £85.5 million school campus will welcome pupils for the first time later this month.

The Paisley Grammar School Community Campus will officially open on Thursday, August 20, providing a new home for up to 1,350 students.

Renfrewshire Council has released new images and drone footage showcasing the completed development, which was delivered on time and on budget.

The campus features specialist STEM and science laboratories, enhanced sports facilities, drama and performance spaces, and flexible teaching environments designed to support modern learning.

It will also become the new home of Renfrewshire's Music School, providing purpose-built facilities for young musicians from across the region.

Built to Passivhaus standards, the campus is one of Scotland's most energy-efficient school buildings.

The project was supported by the Scottish Futures Trust and the Scottish Government's Learning Estate Improvement Programme, which contributed more than £27m.

The school also forms part of Renfrewshire Council's wider AMIDS South project, designed to improve transport links between Paisley, Glasgow Airport and the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation District Scotland.

Infrastructure improvements include a new east-west road, a junction with Renfrew Road and a new connection linking Gallowhill to the Paisley-to-Renfrew cycle route.

Emma Rodden, convener of Renfrewshire Council's education and children's services policy board, said: "This is a landmark moment, not only for Paisley Grammar School but for education across Renfrewshire.

"Paisley Grammar has helped shape the lives of generations of young people. This outstanding new campus allows that proud history to continue in a building designed for the future.

"From the modern teaching spaces to the sports facilities, science laboratories, and performance areas, every part of the campus has been created to give our young people the very best environment in which to learn, grow and succeed."

Scottish education secretary Màiri McAllan said: "I am pleased to have supported this exciting new campus with more than £27m from our Learning Estate Investment Programme.

"As this footage shows, this campus will be a truly inspiring learning environment for pupils for many years to come.

"Curriculum for Excellence aims to equip young people with the knowledge, skills and attributes needed to flourish in the modern world.

"Schools environments such as these – with high-quality science and STEM facilities alongside dedicated spaces for sports, drama, and music – are key to making this happen.

"Every child deserves a great environment to learn and grow in, and 92% of Scottish schools are now rated in 'good' or 'satisfactory' condition compared with 62.7% in 2007.

"We're proud to be building further on this progress by continuing to invest in school improvements across Scotland."

Domestic abuser who murdered partner with hammer in Aberdeen is jailed

A MAN who murdered his partner with a claw hammer while banned from approaching her has been jailed for a minimum of 22 years.

Joseph Greer attacked mother of three Samantha Lee at a property in Aberdeen at some point between January 1 and 4 this year.

The High Court in Dundee heard Ms Lee suffered "catastrophic" head injuries from which she died.

Her body was found in the kitchen of the property in Bedford Road on January 4 after an acquaintance of the couple alerted police.

Greer, 40, pleaded guilty to murdering Ms Lee and to a separate charge of assaulting her to her to severe injury last October on a street in Aberdeen at a previous court hearing.

Lord Renucci sentenced Greer to life imprisonment and ordered him to serve a minimum of 22 years behind bars when the case was called at the High Court in Dundee yesterday.

He said: "Notwithstanding the fact that you have accepted responsibility for her murder, you claim to have no recollection of it.

"As a result, it has been left to the forensic scientists and the pathologists to put the pieces together and provide us with some idea of the extent of your actions.

"What the forensic biology and forensic pathology evidence can tell us is that at some point between January 1, 2026, when Ms Lee was last seen alive, and the discovery of her body on January 4, 2026, you took hold of her and repeatedly struck her on the head and body with a claw hammer or similar type implement whereby she fell to the floor."

At the time of the murder, Greer was banned from approaching or contacting Ms Lee, 54, after being granted bail with special conditions following the assault in October last year.

Ms Lee, who was originally from Coventry, had last been heard from on January 1.

The assault to severe injury last October saw Greer repeatedly strike Ms Lee with a telephone handset in the street.

Lord Renucci described it as a "prolonged, sustained and vicious attack".

He sentenced Greer to five years behind bars for the assault, which will be served concurrently with the sentence for murder.

Tony Lenehan KC, representing Greer, said the 40-year-old had a toxic relationship with alcohol and suffered low mood and felt he was losing control of his life. He said: "Exactly why he killed her, this rare positive in his life, he cannot articulate."

Ms Lee's family previously said: "No verdict can ever bring her back or erase the pain, grief, and loss our family has experienced."

Laura Buchan, legal director at the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, said: "Samantha's death is a stark reminder of the devastating impact violence against women and girls can have.

"Scotland's prosecutors will continue to use every legal tool available to hold those responsible for domestic abuse to account."

Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks

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Communities will benefit directly. Alongside jobs and supply chain opportunities, SSEN Transmission will support the development of 1,000 new homes in the north of Scotland, supporting hundreds of jobs and generating £100m in economic value, while helping to ease local housing pressures. Areas hosting new infrastructure will also benefit from community funding of over £100m, with decisions shaped by local people to reflect what matters most. Investment in biodiversity net gain and peatland restoration will further strengthen rural economies, supporting hundreds of green jobs throughout the north of Scotland.

Put simply, this is an investment in Scotland's future – one that strengthens energy security, supports local economies, creates high-value jobs and helps build resilient communities for generations to come.

More than 60 firms sign up to net-zero mission

MORE than 60 businesses have signed up to Clyde Gateway's Transition to Net Zero programme since it launched in early 2024.

The initiative, which supports companies across Glasgow and South Lanarkshire, provides practical guidance to help organisations reduce carbon emissions and progress towards net zero.

The milestone was celebrated at an event at Topgolf Glasgow, where businesses gathered to share experiences and hear from experts.

Clyde Gateway said the programme is designed to help businesses translate climate ambitions into practical action while strengthening collaboration across the region. Established in 2008 following Glasgow's successful Commonwealth Games bid, Clyde Gateway has helped attract more than £1.5 billion of investment into the area.

Fiona McLean, business and community growth project manager at Clyde Gateway, said: "By bringing businesses together with expert organisations, local case studies and peer networks, we're helping businesses turn ambition into action.

"It's also creating a stronger, more connected business community that's better equipped to respond to future opportunities and challenges."

£1.1m for student homes

A STUDENT development in Dundee is on the market for £1.1 million.

Rose House, located close to both Abertay University and the University of Dundee, is being marketed by Christie & Co as a freehold investment.

The property operates as ILM Student Halls, the UK's first purpose-designed student accommodation built around halal values while providing an inclusive environment for students of all faiths.

The business will continue operating as normal throughout the sale, with residents unaffected.

The owners are selling the freehold as they look to expand the ILM Student Halls concept across the UK.

'Truly proud moment' as King helps town celebrate 800 years of royal status

THE King was treated to a "truly memorable occasion" as he visited a Highland community celebrating a milestone in its history, locals said.

The monarch received a warm welcome yesterday as he visited Dingwall, which is celebrating 800 years since it was granted Royal Burgh status.

He was also given a sense of the powerful community spirit as he met volunteers, local groups, businesses, young people, cultural organisations and emergency services representatives from across Ross-shire.

Joanie Whiteford, the Lord-Lieutenant of Ross and Cromarty, said: "The strength of community spirit and the remarkable creativity and talent on display have made this a truly memorable occasion."

She added: "From our musicians and dancers to our volunteers, businesses and community champions, everyone involved has done Dingwall proud."

The King presented the King's Award for Voluntary Service to the Evanton Wood Community Company and Highland and Islands Blood Bikes in honour of their outstanding contribution to their communities.

The innovation and entrepreneurial success of businesses operating in the Highlands was also recognised as he met recipients of The King's Award for Enterprise, including RSE, Fresh Marketing and WoodBlocX.

A plaque marking Dingwall's 800th anniversary was unveiled in the town hall and performers picked to celebrate the town's cultural history included the Highland Young Musicians and clarsach (traditional harp) player Grace Stewart-Skinner.

Councillor Margaret Paterson described the event as "a truly proud moment" for Dingwall, adding: "Our celebrations have provided an opportunity to reflect on our rich history, celebrate our vibrant present and look ahead to the future. His Majesty's visit has undoubtedly been one of the highlights of this very special year."

The King meets members of the public on a visit to Dingwall, as the town celebrates the 800th anniversary of being granted Royal Burgh status Picture: Ewen Weatherspoon/PA

Glasgow University review over plagiarism professor appointment

Continued from Page 1

review the process which led to his appointment.

A Glasgow University spokesperson said: "Jason Arday was employed as professor of sociology of education from January 2022 to March 2023. He left the university to take up his role as professorial chair at the University of Cambridge.

"The principal has commissioned a review of the appointment with the aim of understanding all the facts and learning lessons for the future."

Nathan Cofnas, an academic sacked from a Cambridge college role in 2024, said he had run Prof Arday's PhD thesis through plagiarism detection software and found what he described as passages "lifted with minimal editing, sometimes retaining copy-editing mistakes from the original source".

Prof Arday has not disputed that errors exist in his work. He has instead argued that he lacked adequate supervision during his PhD because of his autism and learning disabilities, and could not afford a proofreader early in his career.

As well as his claim to have been a visiting professor at Glasgow, Arday has claimed to have completed a masters at the University of London, which had no record of him having studied there, and to have published a book called Being Young, Black and Male: Challenging the Dominant Discourse, with Palgrave Macmillan, which said it took a proposal from him but the book was never published.

The row has also extended to Prof Arday's public claims about charity fundraising challenges.

He has said he raised more than £5 million for charity over 20 years, including through running 30 marathons in 35 days and 600 miles in six days.

He has since told The Guardian the 600-mile challenge was actually completed over 12 days, with rest days built in. Two universities which awarded him honorary degrees, Southampton Solent and Anglia Ruskin, have amended their websites to remove or correct the claims.

He said he could not name those who helped raise the £5m because of non-disclosure agreements.

The professor has previously been the victim of racist abuse, with Cambridge University confirming it had been forced to screen his emails.

However, some specific incidents have been subject to scrutiny. Prof Arday told The Guardian that he had been confronted at his faculty building on two separate occasions, the second of which saw him threatened with a knife.

Neither incident was picked up on CCTV and he did not report them to the police or colleagues.

The academic also claimed a severed pig's head was sent to his parents' home in south London, and police had found a butcher had sold a "whole hog" to a customer that morning.

The Metropolitan Police said that no such investigation had ever taken place and the butcher said it had not been asked any such question.

Prof Arday has also claimed to have played youth football for Crystal Palace, claims which have also been subject to scrutiny.

Cambridge University initially defended him but said on Wednesday evening that it had begun an investigation after "new information" came to light about Prof Arday's "academic qualifications and honorary appointments".

The statement continued: "Separately, there remains a number of ongoing complaints regarding academic misconduct, which are being handled in line with our misconduct in research policy."

It continued: "This is consistent with our previous statement on the matter.

"While we are fully aware of the public commentary and concerns around this matter, it remains vital that any process is thorough and adheres to both university policies and employment law.

"We also fully recognise that there is a person at the centre of this situation, and we continue to provide support to him."

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Festival to showcase innovators

A NEW festival celebrating creativity and technology is set to launch in Glasgow next month.

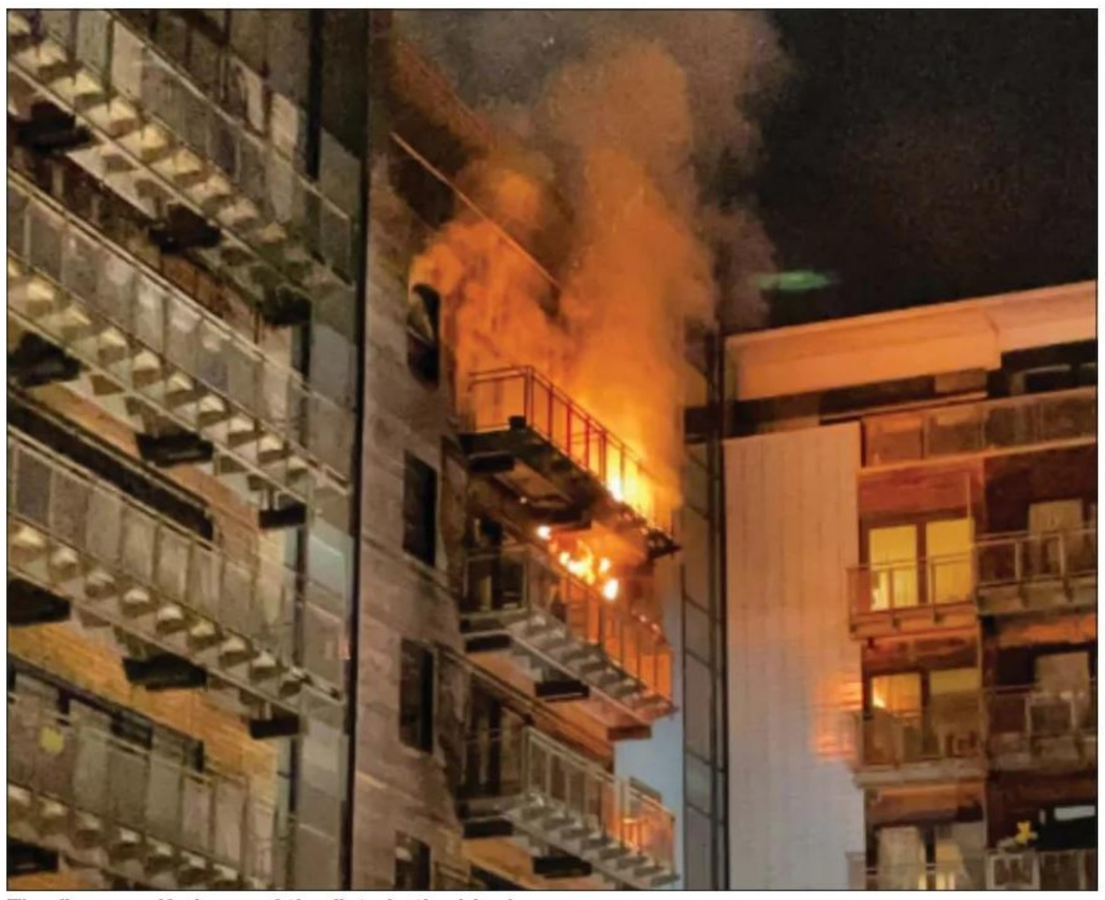
Fusion Fest will headline Glasgow Tech Week on Thursday, September 10, at The Briggait, showcasing how creative thinking and emerging technologies can drive innovation and economic growth.

The event is organised by the Glasgow City Innovation District (GCID) in partnership with Strathclyde University, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and The Glasgow School of Art. There will be talks, interactive installations and demonstrations exploring areas including AI and digital design.

Alisdair Gunn of Glasgow City Innovation District said: "Fusion Fest is the first event of its kind to bring together the city's outstanding creative and technology sectors to forge new collaborations, exchange ideas and lead the next wave of creative technology innovation."

Paul Chapman of The Glasgow School of Art said: "Fusion Fest is a natural home for us, a place where artists, designers and technologists can discover what becomes possible when creative practice and emerging technology are brought together."

Report lays bare safety issues at Edinburgh tower block


The fire engulfed one of the flats in the block

Exclusive
Gaby McKay

AN Edinburgh tower block which was evacuated last month had serious internal safety issues which could have allowed the rapid spread of fire.

Residents were moved from the Bond Building on Breadalbane Street in Bonnington to temporary accommodation, and now say they face years of limbo with flats they can neither sell nor live in.

Residents were invited to a "Town Hall" meeting on July 20 to discuss the situation, where the findings of a report were presented.

An opening statement from Persimmon Homes and the Bond Building Owners Committee states that "residents are not being evacuated" but rather being told to "temporarily relocate as a precautionary measure".

Major fire safety issues had been identified in the building from 2022 onwards, but attendees were told the evacuation was necessary after a new report found previously unidentified fire safety issues.

A previous survey found fire doors did not meet safety standards and would have to be repaired and replaced. Lifts are not fire-fighting lifts as they should be, smoke extraction systems in the lobbies do not work, there are "issues" with fire alarms as well as combustible cladding on the outer walls.

As an interim measure, 24-hour surveillance and evacuation support was set up and had been in place since May 2022, while a previous "stay put" policy was overhauled.

Residents of Grenfell Tower in London operated on a "stay put" policy when fire spread through its external cladding, with 72 people killed and an inquiry finding that the order to evacuate was given too late.

Following that assessment, the building was given a B2 rating on the EWS1 form, which denotes that combustible materials are present in the external wall and, in the assessor's view, the fire risk is sufficiently high that remedial works are required.

A fire did take place at the Bond Building in March 2024, with around 100 residents evacuated who have so far been unable to return, and a new assessment this year saw the rest of the residents of the flats advised to leave.

Under the Housing (Cladding Remediation) Act 2024, buildings with potentially unsafe cladding are subject to a Single Building Assessment (SBA), which came into force in January 2025.

The SBA requires two stages of fire risk assessment to be carried out. One is a non-intrusive assessment in common areas, plant rooms and non-domestic areas. The second stage requires intrusive inspections to common areas and flats themselves, with Arturus Architects having separating walls and steelwork as an addition in this case.

The internal investigation took place in May.

The SBA allowed holes to be cut between apartments to show the full cross-section through the walls in order to check the consistency of construction.

Arturus noted a lack of fire stopping between flats and between the flats and stair/lift cores; lack of fire stopping where ducts/pipes pass through separating floors; and omission of cavity barriers where timber floors cross separating walls.

A lack of fire stopping between flats and stairs or lifts means fire and hot smoke can pass through voids in the walls and spread more easily, while escape routes are compromised.

Between ducts and pipes, a fire can spread above and below through the unsealed gaps, and where timber floors cross separating walls the cavities can behave like a flue and send flames racing through the building.

When those issues were identified, residents were evacuated or, as Persimmon puts it, subject to "precautionary decanting".

At a recent meeting, residents were told the original drawings for the building contained defects, and that there were several inconsistencies between the drawings and what was actually built.

With the building evacuated, flat owners face a property purgatory in which they cannot live in the homes they have bought, but can't sell them either.

One resident told The Herald: "Until the fire happened we didn't realise the property had been changed to a B2 fire rating in 2022.

"After that you pretty much can't sell the properties because you can't get a mortgage for them, so anyone buying in the normal market is ruled out – you'd have to sell to cash buyers. We have explored selling our property, and estate agents in Edinburgh we have spoken to have said we would expect to take a 20% loss on market value due to selling in a restricted market.

"We were forced to rent the property, we were hoping to get rid of it as soon as the remediation works were done and it didn't have a B2 rating any more.

"People feel a bit trapped in these properties. In our block, we have a group chat on WhatsApp which came about after the fire and most of the people in our block have said they want out of the properties.

"They're being put into temporary accommodation by Persimmon but you're essentially putting your life on hold until this building is done, living in a property you don't own.

"We want to buy a house but we need to get rid of this flat before we do that and we're stuck with it. We're not commercial landlords – we were kind of forced to be landlords.

Bond Building on Breadalbane Street

Grenfell Tower in London after the fire in 2017

"We contacted them and explained our situation, that we have a tenant who might leave and what financial options would they consider, including buyouts. They said they'd consider financial options once the tenant has terminated their contract but until then they wouldn't discuss what those options would be, but they said flat out no to a buyout.

"They said the only option was they'd pay for any new tenant to go into temporary accommodation.

"We had to look into whether it was even legal to let a property which technically isn't even available.

"Your only option if you live in the property is to go into temporary accommodation, and if you're a landlord – whether by choice or not – you just have to hope you can keep your tenant until this project is done.

"Basically, the only option they've given people is to wait until they complete these works."

So far, there has been no timeline laid out for how long the work will take, with residents given an estimate of two or three years once the project begins.

One told The Herald: "They're not going to start work until after they send out the fire report and we don't know when that's going to happen.

"I'd imagine they'd have to re-do all the drawings if they now have to consider internal works as well as the external cladding.

"They had that fire report done in 2022, we had drawings through at one point for what they were going to do to the external cladding, but it feels like they sat on their hands for two years and then the fire happened.

"Was that a ticking time bomb and they should have expedited that process? They have to make sure they're rebuilding the property to the best standard possible, but it's crazy that a property was built in 2002 and we're still waiting for this to be fixed.

> "We want to buy a house but we need to get rid of this flat before we do that and we're stuck with it

"The irony is that the brick portion of the building is the only part that seems like it doesn't have an issue with it.

"There's the financial side of everything but there's also the emotional side. We're incredibly stressed, it's all we've been talking about for two or three weeks, but we've been nervous for the past few years having a tenant, and after the fire the communication from anyone involved was horrendous.

"You're just left in limbo. A girl at the Town Hall started crying with anger and frustration."

A spokesperson for Persimmon Homes said: "Following a recent detailed investigation of the building, experts advised that residents should relocate from their apartments as a precautionary measure.

"Persimmon Homes offered alternative accommodation to all affected residents, with the majority having already taken up the offer.

"We recognise that every resident's circumstances is different and are working with individuals on a case-by-case basis to provide appropriate support throughout this process.

"Further investigations are continuing and their findings will determine the scope of the remediation works required, as well as the programme and timescales for delivery.

"We apologise for the understandable inconvenience and concern this situation has caused and remain committed to supporting residents and working with all relevant parties to resolve the situation as quickly as possible."

£1.5m Glasgow railway upgrade

A MAJOR rail improvement project worth more than £1.5 million is getting under way across Glasgow's south side.

The investment will fund track renewals, bridge improvements and the removal of a redundant bridge, with the most intensive work taking place during three weekend line closures in August.

Track will be renewed through Cathcart station and at Langside, while bridge improvements will be carried out at Pollokshaws Road.

Passengers travelling between Glasgow Central and Newton, Neilston and Cathcart Circle stations are being urged to plan ahead.

ScotRail said alternative travel arrangements will be in place, with some rail tickets accepted on local bus services.

Passengers are also being encouraged to use services via Barrhead, East Kilbride or Mount Florida, where possible.

Meanwhile, temporary traffic lights will remain in place at the junction of Nithsdale Street and Allison Street until September 19.

Allison Flanagan, project manager at Network Rail, said: "Looking after a busy railway means occasionally taking time to carry out work that can't be done safely while trains are running."

Footbridge approved for Borders

THE go-ahead has been given for a new footbridge to replace a disused Borders railway bridge.

The plan forms part of Destination Tweed, which will transform the River Tweed into a tourist destination of national and international significance as one of the UK's long-distance walking and cycling routes through the creation of the River Tweed Trail.

The old Shiel Pool Bridge is a former railway bridge on the dismantled Symington, Biggar and Broughton branch line.

Situated south of Broughton, the remaining bridge supports mark the junction where the Talla Railway met the main line. Scottish Borders Council planners approved an application for the erection of a new footbridge at the site.

Bob Kingdom's Thomas portrait is engaging but uneven

Fringe Review

Dylan Thomas: Return Journey, Attic at The Pleasance
***

Evie Glen

Dylan Thomas died in New York at just 39

BOB Kingdom has been portraying Dylan Thomas almost as long as the Welsh poet lived.

Kitted out in a baggy suit, spotted bow tie and auburn wig that seems to recede under the close spotlights, he fumbles with the stage door and walks with a focused gait towards a music stand in the centre. He places two books on the makeshift pulpit and greets the Fringe audience with a fitting: "Good morning culture vultures."

Who's to say how Dylan Thomas would address his crowd if he ever lived to perform in the Pleasance Attic? His reputation as the drunk, laughing mirror for middle-class bohemians to safely mock their own pretensions suggests "good morning culture vultures" might be accurate.

As it happened, he addressed the crowd similarly at a 1952 lecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology – part of Thomas's US lecture series that largely inspired this show – as "some brash antiseptic 42 toothed smiling ardent young hunters of culture with net, notebook, poison bottle, pen and label".

Beyond that sardonic address, however, Kingdom's portrait of Thomas bears little resemblance to the freewheeling and licentious celebrity poet that his American tour helped mythologise. There is no sense that Kingdom's Thomas might drunkenly collapse at the foot of his lectern, just as there is no mention of Greenwich Village, the Chelsea Hotel or the 18th whisky that supposedly ended his life.

Given how short-lived and over-mythologised this period of Thomas's life is (he embarked on his first America tour in 1950, three years before his death), it makes sense that Dylan Thomas: Return Journey should pass it over in favour of a more rounded representation.

Kingdom's Thomas elegiacally spins tales from Thomas's childhood growing up in Swansea as if he did not die at 39 but sobered into his 70s.

When it comes to hyper-localised Welsh villagers, Kingdom is a master impersonator whose ability to switch between various characters enlivens Dylan Thomas's tales – the best of which is an enthralling and very funny story about being dragged as a boy on a charabanc pub crawl with his uncle and a host of red-faced, toothless curmudgeons from the village.

These stories are some of the most entertaining and effective moments of the show.

While Kingdom's rhythmic recitations of some of Thomas's most known poems, including "Death has no dominion" and "Do not go gentle into that good night", capture their sonic dimensions well in his Welsh-inflected world service accent, they feel slightly rushed.

Without the time to mull over the complex modernism of Thomas's verses, the portrait sometimes tips too close to the daffodils for a poet who was neither a simple pastoralist nor an ardent Welsh nationalist.

For veteran Thomas fans, that subtle rushing will do little to diminish an otherwise fuller portrait of the poet, and the man, than is often presented

For new fans, however – those familiar with his name from a Taylor Swift or Phoebe Bridgers song, though not with his poetry – Dylan Thomas: Return Journey is perhaps too sober and dated to entice a younger audience to engage more closely with his writing.

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Beauty, drama and history. Eilean Donan really does live up to the hype

The castle was renovated over 20 years Picture: Athanasios Gioumpasis/ Getty Images

I have finally visited Scotland's top castle. So why did no one tell me about this?

Kevin McKenna AT LARGE

I'D driven past Eilean Donan Castle often, each time reproaching myself for not having stopped to visit. On assignments up the north-west coast towards Skye and beyond, I'd see Scotland's most enchanting castle emerging round that bend on the A87, on the shores of Loch Duich, at the point where it meets its two sister firths, Long and Alsh.

And as I drove slowly past it, wondering if there was enough time for an unplanned shuftie, I'd always hear the sepulchral voice of Virgil Sollozzo in The Godfather: "Ah, make time, Consigliere." But there had always been a deadline to chase down, made sharper still by the impending challenges of camper vans and tractors.

And besides, merely sparing a few minutes for the majesty of Eilean Donan Castle would have seemed sacrilegious, like asking the Queen if she wouldn't mind awfully hurrying up – if it was all the same to her – because you had a train to catch.

I'd first heard of this place from an old history teacher, who would cite it as the ultimate measure by which a location's beauty could be assessed. "It's as beautiful as Eilean Donan Castle," he'd say. Or, if he was dismissing another location's claim to be so: "We're not exactly talking Eilean Donan here."

In my lowland, west-of-Scotland ignorance, I'd heard it as Helen Dornan's Castle and wondered if it was an aphorism – which he was wont to drop – named for some mythical Irish wanton from the 'Oul Country.

Then, a few years later, I finally saw what he'd been talking about when I went to see Highlander at the cinema. There were those iconic opening scenes, with the 15th-century Clan MacLeod warriors striding out to battle along Eilean Donan's battlements, each side adorned with the twisting, caged corpses of vanquished foes.

Even then, my first thought was that this must have been an extravagant movie set, designed according to the instructions of a Hollywood location director: "Make me a castle that immediately takes you to the Scottish Highlands." Did a place as heart-achingly grand and gorgeous really exist in Scotland? Why had no one told me about this?

And there it remained at the top of my life inventory, alongside the Bernabeu, the San Siro, the Maracana and the Sistine Chapel, silently chastising me as if to say: "Your time's running out, sunshine, and you've still not been up to see me." Until last Sunday, when a proper break up the west coast finally gave me some time.

I'm assuming many of you will know about the history of Eilean Donan, but bear with me nonetheless. It bears repeating, if only because few others among Scotland's 2,000 or so castles have featured so prominently in Scotland's big, life-changing moments.

Aye, you can talk about your Edinburgh, your Stirling and your Dunrobin, that stately ancestral home of the pestilential Sutherlands, who brutally evicted thousands of their tenants in the 19th century.

None, though, has a setting as naturally pristine as Eilean Donan, where the waters beneath you and the hills above still echo with the deeds – for better and for ill – that bequeathed us this Scotland.

The castle is named for St Donan, who lived on this tiny island and helped bring Christianity to the Western Isles near the beginning of the 7th century. The first castle came in the 12th century, constructed by King Alexander II against the Vikings, who had annexed most of the north-west coast and the Hebrides.

It became the seat of the Mackenzies: Kenneth, son of Kenneth or, in the old tongue, Coinneach MacCoinneach – who had regained these lands for Alexander III.

One of the more eye-catching, or eye-watering, events that took place here occurred in the reign of Robert the Bruce, who always had a soft spot for Eilean Donan. The Bruce had taken shelter here in the early 14th century after defeat at the Battle of Methven had made him persona non grata in the Highlands and an enemy of England's ruthless Edward Longshanks.

On later fighting his way to the throne, Robert showed his own ruthless streak by sending his nephew to impose a sort of martial law. This involved rounding up 50 known local delinquents, decapitating them and displaying their heads on the castle walls as a warning.

It's this event, I think – and fervently hope – that was referenced in those opening scenes in Highlander. Indeed, the clan battle about to be fought by Connor MacLeod and his kinsmen was a brutal feature of those years. I'm less sure about his Spanish pal, Ramirez, and that big fruit-loop, the Kurgan, right enough ...

Then came the Jacobite Uprising of 1719, when the clans were called out by the exiled King James II to support his doomed claim to the British throne, backed by the Catholic Spanish.

And so it was that a ridiculously token Spanish force, comprising 48 men, found itself staring down the mustered cannon of three Royal Navy ships, which proceeded to scatter them before blowing up the castle with its own stores of gunpowder.

The English, not surprisingly, still had unresolved trauma with gunpowder from a century earlier, when the Pope's first team had come agonisingly close to doing in Westminster. So perhaps, understandably, this was their way of laying their demons to rest.

The felonies and malfeasances of landowners and aristocrats have long scarred these lands, but credit where it's due. The scorched pile left by the English navy is what might still be here were it not for Lieutenant John MacRae-Gilstrap, who bought the island in 1911 and set about faithfully reconstructing it with Farquhar MacRae, whose descendants still own it.

What we see today is the result of a 20-year endeavour costing about the equivalent of £20 million.

So, three cheers to the Lieutenant and the MacRaes, and let's have no more of your infantile mockery of toffs named Farquhar. According to the official castle guide: "The design we see today came to Farquhar MacRae in a dream. The conception was later confirmed to be faithful to the original design when old plans were discovered stored in Edinburgh Castle."

The restoration of Eilean Donan Castle is surely, then, one of the most important cultural and architectural interventions in Scotland's history. And thank God for it too. If John and Farquhar hadn't embarked on this sacred undertaking, one of our heritage agencies and the Scottish Government would eventually have reimagined it according to their own cultural ukases and dogma.

There would be warnings all over these walls telling visitors that they would encounter real 18th-century guns and cannonballs, and that there would be vivid depictions of unpleasantness and beastliness on their tour. And that, should they be triggered, there would be an on-site counselling service.

The old warriors and the kings who employed them would come with newly updated legends beneath their pictures, telling us that, in the interests of inclusive context, some of them might have had dodgy connections to the slave trade.

The beautifully rendered imagining of the 18th-century kitchen and living quarters features mannequins of servants and female cooks, along with artistic models of beast and fowl hanging from the walls. This too would not have escaped Scotland's 21st-century cultural commissars.

There would have been a soft-play area for the children, because the heritage community doesn't think young people are sufficiently intelligent to understand history without lots of goofy smiles and happy endings.

Robert the Bruce would be on a loop, depicted as a cartoon character fighting not an English king but the evils of climate change, with a spider telling him about the importance of the environment.

Last Sunday, when I rocked up, the castle grounds were absolutely hoaching with tourists, all paying the none-too-shabby entrance fee of £13 per adult – much cheaper for children. I walked in and around them for half an hour and counted around a dozen different nationalities.

And I swear to God that I didn't hear another Scottish accent. They were all simply thrilled and enchanted by Eilean Donan Castle, many of them also choosing to hire the headphones that provided recorded commentary in several languages.

In the queue for the ticket desk, there were Poles, Japanese and a Bangladeshi family ahead of me. I know this because the lady at the kiosk window took time to ask each visitor if they'd travelled far to be here. "I hear Warsaw's brilliant," she told them. She then said they would always be very welcome in Scotland.

I felt a little sheepish when I reached her. "I'm from Glasgow," I said.

"Have you been here before?" she asked.

"Eh, well, no," said I.

"Well, I can guarantee you that you'll be back here often," she said.

And she's absolutely spot on. You don't visit Eilean Donan, you experience it and live it. And one visit isn't nearly enough.

EILEAN Donan Castle: adults, £13; aged 60-plus, £12; children aged five to 15, £5.75 during peak summer (£6.50 outwith this period). Family tickets for two adults and up to three children cost £33.25 in peak season. Free admission for children under five. Tickets sold on site only.

Kevin McKenna is Scotland's Columnist of the Year

The castle courtyard Picture: Christian Ender/Getty Images

> The waters beneath you and the hills above still echo with the deeds that bequeathed us this Scotland

A kitchen diorama in the castle Picture: Arterra/Universal Images Group

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Youth who tried to steal actress's phone admits Rolex robberies with machete

A TEENAGER who once threatened to decapitate TV presenter Aled Jones and left a Bridgerton star traumatised after trying to steal her phone is facing more time in prison after admitting arming himself with a machete to steal Rolex watches.

Zacariah Boulares was 16 years old when he ambushed Songs Of Praise star Jones in London in 2023, threatening to cut off his head after snatching his £17,000 Daytona Rolex watch.

Boulares is currently serving a 22-month prison sentence for an incident in February last year when he tried to steal Bridgerton actress Genevieve Chenneour's mobile phone at a branch of Joe & The Juice, also in London.

Now, Boulares, of London, has admitted arming himself with a machete for two robberies in August 2023, when he targeted victims for their Rolex watches.

He robbed Mark Turner on August 9 and 10 days later struck again in a failed bid to steal a watch from Neil Tallantire. Around six weeks later, Boulares went on to target Jones.

Yesterday, at Southwark Crown Court, Judge Alexander Milne, KC, adjourned the cases to Tuesday for a psychological assessment of Boulares and a probation report on "dangerousness" to be finalised for the sentencing hearing.

Boulares, now 19, appeared in the dock to plead guilty to the robbery of Mr Turner, having admitted the attempted robbery against Mr Tallantire at an earlier hearing. He has also pleaded guilty to possession of a machete during both incidents.

In July 2025, Boulares was jailed for a string of crimes including the attempt to steal Ms Chenneour's phone and a theft from a blind woman.

The court heard Boulares has already accumulated 12 convictions for 28 offences, including violence, threatening behaviour, weapon possession and theft.

The attack on Jones happened when Boulares was too young to be publicly identified. The teenager had trailed the TV star along the road and pulled out a machete, shouting "give me your Rolex or I will cut your arm off".

After the robbery, Boulares noticed Jones was following him from a distance and told him to "walk the other way or I will cut your head off".

He was sentenced to a 24-month youth detention and training order, having also admitted stealing a £20,000 Rolex from a man in his 70s at Paddington station in May 2023.

University staff begin strike action over job cuts

Jody Harrison

UNIVERSITY staff have begun two days of strike action in a dispute over job cuts and possible compulsory redundancies.

Members of the University and College Union (UCU) at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, walked out yesterday as the long-running dispute rumbles on.

Staff were on picket lines during the morning at the main entrance to the university campus.

Union members have taken 10 days of strike action since March, but strikes planned for last month were called off during last-minute talks when a commitment was made that there would be no compulsory redundancies in the Languages and Intercultural Studies department before spring 2027.

The union said the promise has not been kept and that management is now looking at possible compulsory redundancies. It said bosses reneging on promises meant the strikes were inevitable and were the fault of management.

The union claimed jobs are also being cut at the long-running Scholar programme, which provides web-based learning to schools and is facing closure. However, it is understood numbers are low.

As well as two days of strikes, union members are also voting in a ballot to extend the mandate for industrial action.

The new ballot, which ends on Wednesday, is necessary because mandates for strike action are time-limited.

Recent changes to trade union legislation mean the new mandate would last for a full 12 months, making the prospect of further strikes at the university during the 2026-27 academic year more likely.

Kate Sang, the union's branch president at Heriot-Watt, said: "The failure of senior managers to keep their word on the deal for no compulsory redundancies until 2027 has left members at Heriot-Watt angry and disappointed in management.

"The fact these strikes are taking place is not down to the union being unwilling to engage.

"It's 100% down to management pressing on with its unnecessary plans to cut jobs and its stubborn refusal to rule out compulsory redundancies. We don't want to be on strike. We want to be supporting students and carrying on the essential research at the university.

"This dispute could be resolved if management had the will to end it and kept its word. It's surely now time for management to commit to not using compulsory redundancies and let staff get back to work."

Jo Grady, UCU general secretary, said: "As the university principal prepares to leave Heriot-Watt at the end of the summer, he has a choice about the legacy he leaves behind.

"He can be remembered as the leader who broke commitments made to staff and oversaw job cuts, or as someone who kept his word and ruled out compulsory redundancies.

"Members have the full backing of the union in this fight and, even at this late stage, he has the opportunity to end this dispute and allow the university to move forward together."

A university spokesman said: "UCU is in dispute with the university and, while the university's focus is on achieving reductions through voluntary means wherever possible, we recognise the root cause of the UCU dispute is that the university has not removed the potential of compulsory redundancy should that be necessary.

"The university proposed deferring compulsory redundancies and reducing the number of redundancies as part of a broader package to resolve the dispute, which UCU has not accepted.

"Good progress has been made through voluntary redundancies and redeployment measures, and we are working towards a total remaining staff reduction of fewer than 10.

"Like other universities we are operating in the context of significant financial challenges facing the sector. Heriot-Watt is taking action to ensure resources are aligned with an academic portfolio that is relevant, academically strong and financially sustainable, to enable investment in areas of growing student demand. Our approach has been measured and evidence-based.

"We remain willing to continue discussions and will now consider the next steps needed to ensure our programmes remain academically strong, properly resourced and financially sustainable."

High five

Performers from the Zambian acrobatic circus act Afronauts perform an extract of their Fringe show on Calton Hill in Edinburgh yesterday Picture: Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images

Ginger Spice tells of 'best birthday present'

SPICE girls star Geri Halliwell-Horner received the "best birthday present ever" as Meryl Streep sang to her for her 54th birthday.

"Ginger Spice", as she was known when in the group, has joined the cast for the sixth season of American mystery comedy-drama television series Only Murders In The Building, which is set in London.

The singer shared a video of co-star Streep giving her a hug and singing her own rendition of Happy Birthday, before she gave Halliwell-Horner a kiss on the cheek.

Halliwell-Horner captioned the video: "The best birthday present ever.

"Spending my birthday with the extraordinary Meryl Streep was a moment I'll always treasure. Thank you @OnlyMurdersHulu for making it so special."

Halliwell-Horner also received birthday messages from her fellow Spice Girls, Lady Beckham, Melanie Chisholm, Melanie Brown and Emma Bunton.

The singer's husband, Christian Horner, to whom she has been married for more than a decade, shared a sweet selfie with her as he joined the well-wishers.

"Happy Birthday @GeriHalliwellHorner. Have an amazing day and another lap around the sun," the former racing driver wrote. "We all love you very much x."

Halliwell-Horner will appear in the upcoming season of Only Murders In The Building alongside fellow newcomers Simone Ashley, Jennifer Saunders and Sir Derek Jacobi.

The season will follow show leads Mabel (Selena Gomez), Charles (Steve Martin) and Oliver (Martin Short) as they investigate the death of true crime podcaster Cinda Channing (Tina Fey).

Streep will reprise her role as Oliver's wife, Loretta Durkin.

Halliwell-Horner rose to international fame with the Spice Girls after the release of their debut single Wannabe in 1996.

She famously quit the girl group in 1998, citing "differences between us", and in December 2000 the rest of the group went their separate ways, announcing an indefinite hiatus.

They reunited in 2012 for the closing ceremony of the London Summer Olympics and in 2019 for their Spice World tour.

Sky-high work for artist as she paints famous Suspension Bridge from hot air balloon basket

BRITISH artist Emily Powell took to the skies yesterday to paint live from a hot air balloon basket.

Powell, 36, flew at 1,400ft as part of the mass ascent at Bristol International Balloon Fiesta.

She took a canvas, a palette with 14 paints on, and three brushes up in the basket for the hour-long flight.

Her piece features the Clifton Suspension Bridge, Cliftonwood's brightly coloured houses and hot air balloons.

The artist flew from the Ashton Court Estate, where the annual fiesta takes place, two miles away to Bedminster Down. She was accompanied by five others, including balloon pilot Peter De Herdt, from Antwerp.

Mr De Herdt flew a orange and brown balloon for Belgian shoe shop Tim's, one of 125 balloons at the fiesta this year.

Speaking after the flight, Powell said: "It was my first time in a hot air balloon and it was really, really calm. I thought it would be a bit more jolty but it was so calming, I just felt so at peace up there.

"It didn't feel that high up. I was just really excited to see everything from a different angle, you could see different colours and the way they played on each other. I'm a really messy painter, so it was scary doing it in a basket with lots of other people with very expensive equipment as I didn't want to spill any paint.

"As soon as I got up there, I was just in the zone and completely forgot about everyone else.

"There may have been a little bit of turquoise paint left on the basket."

Emily Powell at work yesterday as the balloon takes off

Hundreds of ballooning fans attended Ashton Court Estate for the opening ceremony of the fiesta, which began just after 6am.

An Albert Goodman balloon with a fiesta flag was the first to set off, followed by dozens of balloons of all shapes and sizes such as a screwdriver, scarecrow and giant suitcase.

The free-to-attend event is attended by balloonists from across the world including Switzerland, Germany, Mexico and America.

Leo the Lion to be replaced due to poor condition

A STONE lion which sits on top of a Midlothian war memorial is to be replaced after planners were told it posed a risk to visitors if it remained in a public park.

Nicknamed Leo, the lion was placed in Loanhead's Memorial Park as part of a memorial for locals who lost their lives in the Second World War.

But concrete repairs carried out over the years have led to cracks and further damage leaving it beyond further work.

In a statement from an expert stonemason who examined Leo, planning officers have been told years of repairs using cement have made repairing impossible.

They said: "In addition to the failed repairs, the age of the monument has led to separation along the natural bedding planes of the stone. Of particular concern is a pronounced crack located at the lower front foot of the lion. This fissure is deep, appears to represent full separation, and is situated in a structurally critical area.

"Given its location and depth, this defect presents a heightened risk, particularly in a public park setting where the monument is accessible to visitors."

Listed building consent for the removal of Leo and replacement with a 'like for like' statue on the Category C Listed memorial has been approved by planners who said the approach taken by the experts would honour the historic character of it.

Planners were told a 3D model of Leo will be produced to ensure his replacement is accurate in size and proportions before a new lion is carved.

The council warned, however, that proposals from a local firm that Leo is relocated in their garden in the town may not be possible as the existing lion may not fully survive the removal process due to its poor condition.

It says: "While the armed forces group have advised me that the CEO for MacTaggart-Scott in Loanhead, who have donated most of the funding for the replacement, want to put the original Lion in their garden on Edgefield Road for public display, the stone mason believes this is unlikely to be possible due to the condition of the existing lion."

Farm on market at over £1.6m

A BORDERS farm has been put up for sale at offers over £1.675 million.

Netherwells Farm, three miles from Jedburgh, has 70.96 hectares (175.34 acres) and offers productive farmland and versatile agricultural buildings.

Included in the sale is Netherwells farmhouse, a detached three-bedroom 19th-century property with panoramic views across the countryside.

It is on the market through land and estate management specialist FBR Seed. Christopher Kennedy, its senior surveyor, said: "The sale is a rare chance to secure a quality farm, which has been owned by the sellers for the past 15 years.

"It is situated within a private yet accessible rural location just three miles from the A68 and the town of Jedburgh.

"Netherwells represents an exciting opportunity for an established farmer seeking to expand their enterprise and landholding, or for a new entrant to the industry looking to secure their first holding."

New Wick to Glasgow flights as year-round route starts

A NEW air route connecting the far north of Scotland with Glasgow and the central belt is preparing to launch this month.

Air Charter Scotland has secured a year-round public service obligation (PSO) contract to operate services between Wick John O'Groats Airport and Aberdeen, with a new route to Glasgow also included.

The service will run from August 15 until August 14, 2027, offering three return flights per week between Wick and Glasgow, alongside weekly return services between Wick and Aberdeen.

The Highland Council said the new Glasgow connection responds to longstanding demand and will create new opportunities for business, healthcare, tourism and economic growth across the North Highlands.

Air Charter Scotland first took over the service in January and has since carried around 1,800 passengers on the Wick-Aberdeen route.

The airline said the service has helped rebuild passenger confidence and maintain important links for communities, including access to healthcare, education, employment and family connections.

Flights will operate in partnership with AIS Airlines using 18-seat BAe Jetstream 32 aircraft.

The schedule includes Wick-Glasgow services via Aberdeen on Mondays, direct Wick-Glasgow flights on Wednesdays, and Wick-Glasgow via Aberdeen services on Fridays.

Meanwhile, Wick-Aberdeen return flights will operate on Tuesdays and Thursdays, while Sunday services will provide return connections between Glasgow, Wick and Aberdeen.

Derek Thomson, chief operating officer of Air Charter Scotland, said: "Since taking over the service in January, our focus has been simple – to deliver a reliable operation, provide exceptional customer service and build trust within these communities."

Hoffman says Parker is now his girlfriend

ACTOR Cooper Hoffman has confirmed he is in a relationship with his co-star Nico Parker.

The couple are second-generation performers – Hoffman, 23, is the son of the late actor Philip Seymour Hoffman, and Parker, 21, is the daughter of British actress Thandiwe Newton and director Ol Parker.

The two, who starred in the 2025 film Poetic License, were pictured with their arms around each other at the Toronto International Film Festival last September.

Speaking to the Hollywood Reporter, Hoffman said: "We didn't officially start dating until a few weeks after filming, when she came to New York to meet my mom [costume designer Mimi O'Donnell], and I asked her to be my girlfriend. It was very sweet."

The couple met on the set of the film.

Parker began her career with the 2019 film Dumbo and has since appeared in Bridget Jones: Mad About The Boy and How To Train Your Dragon.

Hoffman made his film debut in Licorice Pizza in 2021 and had a lead role in the 2025 adaptation of Stephen King's The Long Walk.

Rowland joins The Voice as first look at new coaching line-up is revealed

From left, Sir Tom Jones, Danny Jones, Kelly Rowland, Will.i.am and Tom Fletcher

ITV has released a first look at the upcoming season of The Voice, which sees Kelly Rowland join as a coach.

The Destiny's Child singer, 45, has replaced country star LeAnn Rimes, who left the show after one season.

Rowland will join Will.i.am, Sir Tom Jones and last year's winning joint coaches, Tom Fletcher and Danny Jones from McFly, in the coaching line-up.

Emma Willis – who will also host the upcoming season of Strictly Come Dancing – will also return to The Voice this season, with ITV teasing she will be "steering the show through every emotional high note, electrifying performance, and dramatic chair turn".

A change is also being introduced this season – the Rewind button, which will give each coach one chance during the Blind Auditions to change their mind about an act who has left the stage without a single chair turn.

If a coach realises they have made a mistake, they can hit Rewind, bring the act back, and offer them a place on their team.

In June last year it was reported Rimes had quit The Voice after one season, with ITV then confirming the news a month later when announcing Rowland had signed up.

Rowland began her career in the 1990s with US girl group Destiny's Child, alongside Beyonce Knowles and Michelle Williams.

The singer has also achieved two UK No 1 solo singles – Dilemma with rapper Nelly and When Love Takes Over with DJ David Guetta.

BBC Gardeners' World presenter Jamie Butterworth with Christine Falconer and Sharon Gemmell in the garden that has now been given to Parklea Branching Out

Saltire garden from Games is now blooming at Clydeside site

Paul English

IT'S the garden where the King and Queen landed in Doctor Who's Tardis, and which welcomed 3,000 athletes to Glasgow 2026. Now the Scottish Nature Garden from the Commonwealth Games opening ceremony is putting down roots on the banks of Clyde, as part of the Games' legacy.

The botanical installation, designed by creative director Amalie White and BBC Gardeners' World presenter Jamie Butterworth, was seen by a global TV audience of billions during the ceremony.

It has now been installed at Parklea Branching Out, a therapeutic horticulture charity and garden centre in Port Glasgow, Inverclyde.

King Charles and Queen Camilla were greeted by the verdant representation of a Saltire when they made their spectacular entrance at the Games opening ceremony last month, appearing in the Tardis alongside Olympian Sir Chris Hoy and actor Greg McHugh.

Since then it has been enjoyed by visitors to Games events at the Hydro and Scotstoun Stadium, before being transferred this week to Parklea, on the lower banks of the River Clyde.

Author and presenter Butterworth came to Glasgow to help install the garden ahead of the ceremony, which saw Skye-based electro-folk band Valtos perform an unbroken hour-long tune amid grasses and shrubs as athletes from 74 Commonwealth teams paraded into the arena, planting each of their batons in the garden.

The batons, carved from the wood of fallen trees in Glasgow's parks by craftsman Tim Norman, were later displayed at the Games' Kelvingrove Live site, before going home with the teams.

Butterworth returned to help install their creation at Parklea Park.

He said: "We're thrilled the garden is relocating to Parklea Branching Out, which is a brilliant organisation that is using horticulture in a completely different and deeply impactful way.

"The installation will stay in the heart of Scotland, retaining its Saltire shape for a few weeks so people can arrange to visit it at Parklea Branching Out, before the plants are eventually settled into their permanent borders."

Parklea Branching Out was established in 1997 in Inverclyde. The organisation supports more than 200 young people and adults each week through 45 weekly sessions, and runs a garden centre. The project opened a £2 million training hub and community cafe in 2024.

Manager Sharon Gemmell said the Saltire garden would be used as an educational resource, with some of the plants eventually being planted in their borders. There are also plans to propagate plants from the Saltire garden for the charity to sell.

She said: "The therapeutic nature of horticulture is so important in helping people with their social connection, physical activity and health and wellbeing. Introducing these plants and their soft, muted colours and textures, which were chosen to reflect the Scottish landscape, will help bring natural calm and a sense of place to the project.

Early visitors enjoy the new site

How the garden looked at the Games

> "It will stay in the heart of Scotland, retaining its Saltire shape for a few weeks

"A core part of what we do is fostering connections between people and our environment. For us to be the beneficiary of the garden is hugely important. It will have so many benefits for people with learning disabilities, autism and additional support needs."

It took two trucks and two fork lifts to move the 200 square metre living installation down the M8 to Port Glasgow in segments containing around 2,400 peat-free perennials, live trees and shrubs.

It had originally been constructed in planters, on wheels to allow for it to be removed from the arena in two minutes before dancers and singers took to the stage.

Parklea Branching Out provides training, work experience, supported employment, recreational and social facilities for adults and children with learning or physical disabilities. It also supports people with mental health problems, school leavers, the unemployed, elderly and other community groups.

Ms Gemmell said: "The plants will need to be maintained and cared for and we are really excited not only about the impact they will have on our site but also the work and training opportunities having the garden will bring, because someone will have to look after these borders, learn about the plants they're working with, how to care for and maintain them and how to propagate those plants."

The charity plans to share propagated plants from the garden with other community groups in the area.

Designer Ms White said: "It's rare for a piece of set design to have a life beyond the stage, but because this was created using living plants it was always our ambition it would find a permanent home in Scotland, growing and flourishing long after the Games.

"It was the first thing audiences encountered as the opening ceremony began, a landscape where a global community came together, connecting with Scotland, nature, and ultimately one another.

"The fact it will continue to thrive in Port Glasgow, beyond the Games, where it can be enjoyed by the people who work in and visit the space, is a fitting next chapter in its story."

Louisa Mahon, chief marketing officer for Glasgow 2026, said: "We're delighted the Scottish Nature Garden has found a home in Port Glasgow, a town that has such strong links to Glasgow. It's great to know it will help the brilliant work being done at Parklea Branching Out. It's such a fitting legacy for these Games."

Willoughby admits 'stalking' McNally as talk spotlights 'ultimate wardrobe staple'

TELEVISION presenter Holly Willoughby has admitted to "stalking" Joanne McNally on Instagram.

Last month the former This Morning host, 45, launched her new YouTube series Holly Willoughby Together.

On the latest episode, released yesterday, her guest was comedian, podcaster, writer and presenter McNally, who was determined to convince Willoughby that tracksuits are the "ultimate wardrobe staple".

When introducing McNally, Willoughby admitted being a huge fan of the My Therapist Ghosted Me podcaster.

She said: "I'm not sure I've ever been so excited by anything in my entire life because today's guest I feel like I know her really, really well, but I think I've met her once.

"I've stalked her on Instagram, I've sent her messages and the reason why this is, is because of her podcast with Vogue Williams... but today Joanne McNally is in our studio, and we are going to be talking about tracksuits.

"But before that I'm obviously going to be asking her lots of questions I just want to know personally."

After McNally joined her in the studio, Willoughby told her about her love of her podcast, which launched in 2021.

"I love you. You and Vogue are the best things ever. There's not an episode I haven't listened to," she said. "I also love that you girls are so open and honest. It's so refreshingly honest."

During their chat, Willoughby and McNally discussed other subjects including tattoos and McNally breaking the record for the most alcohol purchased by an audience during a single show at the London Palladium. The two went on to try a range of tracksuit styles during the 45-minute episode.

Covering topics such as practical advice, fashion, beauty and health, Willoughby's new lifestyle channel, Together, launched on July 28 and has featured guests Stanley Tucci, Katherine Ryan and campaigner Ellen Roome, whose son Julian "Jools" Sweeney died in 2022 after what his mother believes was an online challenge went wrong.

Willoughby fronted ITV's This Morning for 14 years, but stepped down in 2023.

STOP HERMISTON AI DATA CENTRE
NO DATA CENTRES IN SCOTLAND
SAY NO TO CATO DATA CENTRE
SAY NO TO CATO DATA CENTRE
HANDS OFF OUR COUNTRYSIDE!
STOP SELLING SCOTLAND TO BIG TECH
NO AI DATA CENTRES IN CHAPELHALL
Campaigners from local communities across Scotland fighting off data centre developments gather at the Scottish Parliament

'Idea that Scotland can host biggest data centres in world is pie in the sky'

Vicky Allan

A PROPOSED hyperscale data centre in Argyll has announced it is "stalled, if not halted" and cited grid connection delays in the decision to mothball the proposal.

The company's chairman, Peter Griffiths, last week told the Isle of Bute News that grid connection to the Cowal peninsula was the problem and that he had been quoted "£5.5 million for two cables" – but they couldn't be connected for several years.

Campaigners welcomed the pause of the development near Dunoon, but said the size and scale had always been "completely unrealistic" and the issue was that the plan was part of a wave of speculation.

According to its prospectus, Argyll Data Development had applied for the site on the Cowal peninsula to be an AI Growth Zone, in a "phased capacity expansion beginning with a scale-up to 100 megawatts followed by growth to 600 megawatts, with the potential to ultimately exceed two gigawatts at full build-out".

For Kat Jones, director of Action to Protect Rural Scotland, the issue is its size. She said: "Stargate, being built by OpenAI in Texas, will be 1.2GW when fully built and is currently operating at around a quarter of that capacity, so the idea that Scotland can host AI data centres bigger than the biggest being built in the world right now is absolute pie in the sky.

"These facilities cannot run solely on renewables because they have 24/7 power demand and so they need to connect to the grid.

"It is not a huge surprise that the developer of a data centre in Dunoon cannot find the connection that he needs. It was obviously always ludicrous that it could scale to 2GW, half of Scotland's peak demand, but even at 0.1GW (100MW) this is a huge amount of energy, more than double the peak demand of all the households in Argyll."

This is the second site that had been proposed in Scotland for a hyperscale data centre at the scale of a gigawatt that had run into problems, she pointed out.

The AI Pathfinder site at Irvine was trumpeted last year by North Ayrshire Council as a "hugely significant" and "transformational" £15 billion boost to the area. But, in a recent Bloomberg investigation, the company behind it is described as "like a cautionary tale in the clamour for 'sovereign AI'.

The article, titled "Troubled $20 Billion Data Center Shows UK's Struggle in AI Race", said: "The company has crumbled, mired in acrimonious lawsuits, and lost large portions of its staff. It's an unusual corporate saga, but indicative of the hype of so many promised AI mega-projects."

Ms Jones said: "This shows even more clearly how urgent it is that the Scottish Government put in place a moratorium so we can get a grip on the speculative rush for hyperscale data centre planning permissions. Communities across Scotland are making their voices heard – we need to slow down and consider what we are doing so that our environment and communities are not harmed."

Meanwhile, many groups and organisations are calling for a data centre moratorium.

Scottish Greens MSP Ariane Burgess said: "This is just the latest in a wave of speculative hyperscale data centre applications across Scotland, and it won't be the last.

"The Scottish Greens are calling for an urgent moratorium on large-scale data centres until the Scottish Government puts proper planning guidance in place – including a mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment."

The Killellan Farm site, Mr Griffiths explained, was one of 42 locations submitted across Scotland as part of the Scottish Government's AI Growth Zone process. "We responded to the Scottish Government's invitation to identify strategic locations capable of supporting future AI infrastructure, reflecting both Scottish Government and UK Government policy to encourage investment in artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure."

Argyll Data Development's prospectus for the bid said the plan represented "a transformative, nationally significant initiative to establish a world-leading hub for AI-enabled hyperscale digital infrastructure, renewable energy systems, and regional economic revitalisation".

Mr Griffiths emphasised that the development was "not halted because of its location, local opposition or planning considerations".

"The decision to stop progressing the project was taken many months ago because a commercially viable electricity connection could not be secured within a time frame that justified investment," he said.

He added: "In many respects, Killellan Farm is no longer the story. It simply illustrates the wider challenge facing AI infrastructure across the UK. The question is not whether suitable sites exist or whether planning permission can be obtained. The real question is whether the UK can provide affordable electricity, timely grid connections and long-term investment certainty that allow globally mobile AI infrastructure investment to take place here rather than elsewhere."

Since data centres are highly energy-intensive, he explained, investment decisions are driven by four key factors: "Competitive electricity pricing, reliable grid access, high-capacity digital connectivity, and long-term policy certainty."

He said: "The challenge is not simply obtaining a grid connection. It is obtaining a grid connection that provides sufficient capacity at a price that allows the facility to compete internationally. Without affordable and reliable electricity, investment will naturally flow to countries offering lower operating costs and greater certainty."

The announcement of the mothballing of the development comes in the wake of Ofgem's announcement last week that it would charge proposed data centre projects between £237,500 and £712,500 per megawatt to gain access to the UK's stretched grid.

The grid is swamped with applications. According to a recent Ofgem consultation document, "between November 2024 and June 2025, contracted demand in the connection queue increased from 41 GW to 125 GW". It stated: "Of this, around 73 GW are data centres. For a sense of scale, peak demand in Great Britain in 2025 was 45 GW."

Griffiths expressed some doubts about how helpful Ofgem's new system is. "While providing greater certainty over grid access is welcome, there is a real question as to whether increasing the cost of obtaining a connection will encourage or discourage investment," he said. "Hyperscale AI infrastructure is already one of the most capital-intensive forms of development, with project costs today typically in the region of £10m to £12m per megawatt of deployed capacity.

"Adding further upfront connection costs risks reducing the UK's competitiveness at a time when international investment is highly mobile. Capital will naturally gravitate towards countries that can offer affordable energy, timely connections and a stable investment environment."

Among the questions raised by APRS is where the energy to drive this giant data centre complex would come from.

In its AI Growth Zone prospectus, Argyll acknowledged the grid constraints and said that, to overcome them, the project would use "on-site renewable energy systems including wave, wind, solar, vanadium flow batteries, and hydrogen production".

However, the charity noted that the 74-hectare site proposed could "only produce a small fraction of the energy needed for a 600-2,000MW data centre".

Currently, the Killellan site has planning consent, received in 2020, for a single data centre building of approximately 1,500 square metres, which will sit approximately 17 metres below the surrounding ground level within the existing quarry, with a maximum height of around 10 metres.

"That planning permission remains in place," Griffiths said. "But there are currently no plans to construct the building because the uncertainty surrounding electricity availability and connection timescales means there is no viable commercial business case."

Further areas targeted for development included a former oil and gas rig production site in the Ardyne Point area.

Speaking to the Isle of Bute News last week, Griffiths claimed he had been "bombarded by stupidity" about his project plan for Cowal. "There are people in Bute who are full of stupidity, claiming they will have to look on to a big industrial site. That is nonsense because it will all be underground. All they'll see is farm buildings."

> "There are people in Bute who are full of stupidity, claiming they will have to look on to a big industrial site

Bute resident John Duncan told The Herald: "There will be a sense of relief that this development is not going ahead. The lack of consultation with the people of Bute led to a lot of anxiety in the community.

"Our biggest concern was the possibility of an AI hyperscale data centre of up to 2GW being developed across from Rothesay Bay. It appears that neither the hyperscale data centre nor the much smaller data storage centre will be going ahead, but we will continue to be vigilant in case the plans change."

Ariane Burgess said: "In the middle of an energy and climate crisis, with Highland households struggling to pay their bills and wildfires tearing through the Cairngorms, it is incomprehensible that anyone would propose such an energy and water-guzzling data centre on our fragile coast – drawing precious energy from Highland homes and directing it to a development that would drink our water dry and leave pollution behind on one of Scotland's most fragile coasts."

"Local residents aren't bombarding anyone with 'stupidity'. They're asking reasonable questions about the impacts the data centre could have on the area and showing exactly the scrutiny this proposal has so far escaped.

Mr Griffiths responded to the criticisms of the campaigners: "We do not fundamentally disagree with many of the concerns being expressed by local campaigners.

"We share the view that future AI infrastructure should be designed with environmental considerations at its heart and that visual impact, emissions and wider effects on communities should be kept as low as is reasonably practicable.

"Where we perhaps differ is in how that objective is achieved.

"In our view, the future of AI infrastructure should become more efficient, more distributed and more closely aligned with local energy resources."

He added: "The debate should not be about whether Scotland participates in the AI economy, but about how it does so in a way that is economically competitive, environmentally responsible and beneficial to local communities."

How to view Wednesday's solar eclipse safely? Use a colander, expert says

THE UK will see its fullest solar eclipse for the next 54 years on Wednesday – and the safest way to view it at home is through a colander, according to experts.

More than 90% of the Sun will be obscured by the Moon between 6.17pm and 8.06pm on August 12, the most it has been blocked above UK skies since the total eclipse in 1999.

But the Royal Greenwich Observatory has warned the public that sunglasses are not a safe enough method to view the cosmic phenomenon.

Imo Bell, a planetarium astronomer at the observatory, told the Press Association: "It's not a total eclipse, but over 90% is really exciting.

"We're not going to get one this good for a really long time.

"So it's important not to miss it, and to be prepared. You can't just go out and expect to have a look because it's really dangerous for your eyes.

People are advised to use solar eclipse glasses – or a colander

"So you can use solar eclipse glasses, which are very, very different from sunglasses – they block out so much light that you can't see anything through them except the Sun, because that's how much light they need to block for the damaging light of the Sun to be safe to view. "Ideally, a solar telescope is an amazing way to witness it, and if you don't have one of them then you can look into whether your local astronomy society is doing any events.

"And if all else fails, you can project the image of the eclipse using a household item like a colander which has lots of holes in – point the colander towards the Sun with your back facing it, and in the shadow of the colander you'll be able to see the eclipse in the holes, which is really cool."

The next time the Moon obscures as much of the Sun will be in 2081, and the next total solar eclipse in the UK will be in 2090.

The maximum point of coverage is expected to be at around 7.13pm.

Ms Bell advised getting to a vantage point facing west, with minimal buildings around, as the best way to view the eclipse.

"We might notice the sky getting a little bit dark, so if you're looking safely, it'll look a bit like the Moon is taking a bite out of the Sun, you'll see something that looks a bit like a crescent Sun."

The Met Office said it is too early to tell where the clearest skies will be to see the eclipse, but its long-term forecast said more changeable conditions are likely in the north with showers and stronger winds, while parts of the south will see warm and dry conditions.

Ms Bell said: "It'll be a nice, long event which is really exciting. The Sun's going to be really quite close to the horizon because it will be setting at that point towards the western horizon.

"So it's really important that viewers from the UK find a good view of the western horizon and make sure their view of the Sun isn't blocked by any buildings or hills."

Reykjavík in Iceland and Spanish cities A Coruna, Oviedo, Zaragoza, Bilbao and Valencia will see a total eclipse on Wednesday, in which the Moon fully obscures the Sun.

A lesson in life – but look out for the old guy

Fringe Theatre

Stand Up If You're Here Tonight
Underbelly
****

Neil Cooper

EVERYBODY'S welcome in American writer John Kolvenbach's play.

This is made clear by the grizzled old guy standing at a desk on the stage throughout as he invites the audience to join him in communing with – well, pretty much everything, really. As the man engages with us, what follows might initially be mistaken as a free-form riff that is part performance lecture, part pop psychology, self-help routine, and part private confessional.

While there are hints of all these things at play over the show's 55 minutes, what emerges out of Kolvenbach's meticulously crafted text is a collective cry for help that lays bare the basic human need to connect.

To be clear, this is no angst-filled hippy indulgence. Rather, in Kolvenbach's own production, presented here by Boston's Huntington Theatre Company, what you get is a near Beckettian tragicomic meditation on life, love and loss born of the solitary confinement enforced by the devastating effects of the Covid pandemic.

As performed by Broadway and US TV regular Jim Ortlieb's what you get by way of Ortlieb's avuncular delivery is something that amplifies the play's profound sense of human warmth.

As eccentric an oddball as the man might be, there is a life of wisdom and experience there, and at the heart of the matter is a desire to speak with us, even as he, like us, must come to terms with his losses.

Out of all the enforced loneliness, the man seems to be saying, the time is now. All you have to do is embrace the moment and breathe. Life will surely follow.

Aldi and Lidl should face equal store rules

ALDI and Lidl should be covered by the same land agreement rules as the UK's largest supermarket chains, the UK competition watchdog has said in provisional findings.

The Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) proposal would prevent the German discount brands from blocking rival supermarkets opening close to their stores.

Rules designed to stop large grocery retailers from using land agreements to make it harder for rivals to open nearby were introduced in 2010. The restrictions apply to seven retailers – Asda, Co-op, Marks and Spencer, Morrisons, Sainsbury's, Tesco and Waitrose.

In a provisional decision, the CMA said it believes Aldi, Lidl GB and Lidl NI should also be subject to the rules.

Aldi is the UK's fourth largest grocer, with a 10.8% share of the market, and Lidl the sixth largest with an 8.8% share, according to recent figures from Worldpanel.

The regulator said the brands were not originally included in the rules due to their more limited range of products, but said they should now be covered by the restrictions after expanding their shop estate and opening larger stores.

Blue star to appeal over aircraft assault

BLUE star Lee Ryan is planning a Supreme Court challenge after losing previous appeals over his conviction for racially aggravated assault on an aircraft, a court has heard.

The singer, 43, was "slurring his words and staggering around" after drinking a whole bottle of port before a British Airways flight from Glasgow to London City Airport in July 2022.

After being refused more alcohol and told to return to his seat, Ryan made comments about flight attendant Leah Gordon, calling her a "chocolate cookie" before grabbing her wrists.

He was convicted of racially aggravated assault and behaving in an abusive way towards a cabin crew member in 2023. After failing to appeal against his conviction, first at the Crown Court and then the High Court, Ryan now falls to be re-sentenced.

Yesterday, his barrister Thom Dyke told Isleworth Crown Court the singer was making an "application for legal appeal to the Supreme Court".

Mr Dyke said the deadline for the application was August 11, and they expected an answer on a "point of law" within the next two months.

Ryan was not in attendance for the short hearing.

During earlier court proceedings, the flight attendant said Ryan told her he wanted to have her "chocolate children" and wanted to kiss her.

After telling him to "stay away", she said he grabbed both her wrists before passengers intervened.

She added: "I was intimidated, I felt a bit embarrassed like I wasn't doing my duty properly."

Ryan confessed to drinking a whole bottle of port in the British Airways lounge after the flight was delayed, and said he had no memory of the incident.

If the singer is unsuccessful in his Supreme Court appeal, he will be sentenced again at Isleworth Crown Court.

Double killer had 'pathological' urge to sexually assault women, court hears

A PROLIFIC sexual predator has been found guilty of murdering two women and violently raping a third.

Predator Simon Levy had sexually assaulted a string of women before he carried out his first murder and continued groping women until he killed a second time.

Earlier this year, Levy, 40, was found guilty by a jury at Inner London Crown Court of groping 10 women on the Tube and an 11th while in prison.

Prosecutor Will Martin said his desire to sexually assault women was "on the verge of compulsive or pathological".

Levy sexually assaulted two women in 2018, one while in prison in 2022, then once released, groped a woman on the Tube in October 2023, three more in October the following year, and beat and raped another in January 2025, before he murdered Carmenza Valencia-Trujillo in March 2025.

He then sexually assaulted six more women on the Tube – one in March, three in April and two in May 2025, before he murdered Sheryl Wilkins in August last year.

Jurors saw through his claims that all the contact had somehow been accidental on wobbly or crowded trains, or after he became partially sighted in May 2024.

Levy's sinister tactic was to tie a jumper or hoodie around his waist, strapping his arm down, and then backing towards his victim with his hand fully or partially covered.

He would grope the bottom or vagina of the young women he had chosen as victims, with some reacting angrily when they realised what had happened. One called him a pervert and emptied a can of coke over him, while another shouted at him not to touch her.

Levy, from Tottenham, north London, was convicted of 10 counts of sexual assault on the Tube, and an 11th at Brixton prison, by a jury at Inner London Crown Court on February 4. Jurors took less than three hours to convict him of all the charges, which he had denied but refused to give evidence to explain himself.

Some looked visibly shocked as Judge Michael Evans KC told them Levy was facing a second trial at the Old Bailey for murder.

The offences took place between April 2022 at the prison, followed by the Tube assaults between October 24, 2023 and May 2025.

He had already been convicted of sexually assaulting two women in 2018, which was why he was in prison in 2022.

The full scale of Levy's offending can now be reported, with compulsive groping of women on the Tube and a violent rape and two murders months apart.

The rape and murders were dealt with separately at the Old Bailey, where the court heard that Levy beat, raped and non-fatally smothered one woman, who cannot be named, in January 2025; as well as murdering Carmenza Valencia-Trujillo, 53, that March and Sheryl Wilkins, 39, in August last year.

A temporary reporting ban was put in place on the Inner London case to avoid prejudicing any trial at the Old Bailey. He will be sentenced next Wednesday.

Vera Weisfeld in Torr Hall in 2014 Picture: Julie Howden

Torr Hall, near Bridge of Weir

The stately home boast Baronial features

The décor is inspired by traditional styles

Mansion once owned by retail tycoon Vera Weisfeld on sale

Jody Harrison

A SPECTACULAR Scots Baronial mansion which was once owned by What Every Woman Wants founder Vera Weisfeld has gone on the market.

Torr Hall, designed by architect James Soutar in 1903 and completed around 1905 for the Cargill family, is regarded as one of the county's most distinctive country houses.

It became home to Mrs Weisfeld and her family after she launched her sprawling retail empire, which was sold in 1990 for £50 million after growing from a single Glasgow store.

Set within 58 acres in Renfrewshire, near Bridge of Weir, the stately home has its own ballroom, private cinema and wine cellar, along with a helicopter hangar and guest accommodation.

It has gone on the market with an asking price of offers over £2.2m.

Built from granite quarried in north-east Scotland, a material rarely used for large houses in the west of the country, the property showcases many of the defining features of the Scots Baronial style, including crowstepped gables, corbelled turrets and bartizans, canted bay windows and pedimented dormers, estate agent Corum said in its property listing.

The architectural details are centred around a dramatic three-storey curved entrance bay with an attached circular turret.

Vera Weisfeld famously grew up in a small flat in Coatbridge which had neither electricity nor an indoor toilet.

She started working for fashion chain C&A at 15, learning the trade thoroughly before branching out on her own.

The businesswoman said that no home she owned could match the tiny house she grew up in, despite becoming the owner of the lavish Torr Hall.

The mansion opens into a grand entrance hall complete with a fireplace, while a turret rises above the vestibule to rooms on the floors above.

A broad panelled staircase leads to a galleried landing illuminated by a cupola overhead.

The main reception areas reflect the home's origins as a property built for entertaining. Accommodation at ground-floor level includes a ballroom, drawing room and library, all with fireplaces, alongside a formal reception hall, sitting room, dining room and a snug bar. The floor also features a cloakroom, WC and bathroom.

Beyond the principal entertaining areas are a mess and preparation kitchen, utility rooms, and a main kitchen with a large breakfasting area. A back hall, complete with a gun closet, provides access to the basement.

The first floor centres on a wide upper hallway. The principal bedroom suite includes an en-suite bathroom and its own private turret, while a second bedroom benefits from an en-suite WC and dressing room.

Additional accommodation on the floor includes a home theatre and two further double bedrooms, served by a shower room, bathroom and separate WC. The rear wing contains three more double bedrooms, together with a bathroom and additional WC.

A substantial storeroom in the southern wing extends to another bedroom, sitting area and store above, while the second floor houses a self-contained apartment suitable for staff or guests, featuring its own bedroom, lounge, kitchen and shower room.

The upper levels also include a loft bedroom, lounge area and storage space, while the rear staircase continues to the top floor, where a large office and walk-in store are located.

Below stairs, the basement contains a lower lounge, wine cellar, extensive storage rooms and plant rooms for the house's heating and electrical systems.

Outside, the estate extends to around 58 acres of formal gardens, sweeping lawns, mature woodland planting and rhododendrons, with further land used for grazing.

The grounds also feature a tennis court, stables, greenhouse and storage buildings. Among the more unusual amenities is a helicopter hangar and dedicated hardstanding area for landings.

The former coach house has been converted into two self-contained guest properties above garaging and storage facilities.

One of the lodges has been modernised as an apartment with a fitted kitchen, dining space, lounge, double bedroom and bathroom. The second includes a kitchen and lounge at ground level, with two bedrooms, a bathroom and a sitting room on the upper floor.

Vera Weisfeld died in 2025 at the age of 87. Her son John, from a previous marriage, passed away in 2013, while her husband Gerald, who she set up "What Every's" with, died in 2020.

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THE SCOTTISH Farmer

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George Michael's Range Rover Vogue goes under the hammer

A 2002 Range Rover once owned by Wham! star George Michael is going up for sale at auction.

The third-generation Range Rover was purchased new by Michael before going into the ownership of the singer's father. It was then returned to the Faith star, after which it went into dry storage. It was bought by its current owner back in 2017.

Offered by classic auctions and modern performance specialist Trade Classics, the Range Rover Vogue comes with its original five-spoke alloy wheels and "Oslo Blue" metallic paint, while inside there is full charcoal leather upholstery with heated front seats and original carpets in "excellent condition", according to the vendor.

The Range Rover also features electronic air suspension, which can be raised or lowered depending on the driving situation.

All of the car's handbooks are present and are accompanied by older MOT certificates and an HPI report which displays the car's original registration plate. It also shows the original Stratstone of Mayfair service book used before the vehicle was moved to its current registration. There is a copy of the old V5C document which has George Michael's birth name – Georgios Kyriacos Panayiotou – on it, too.

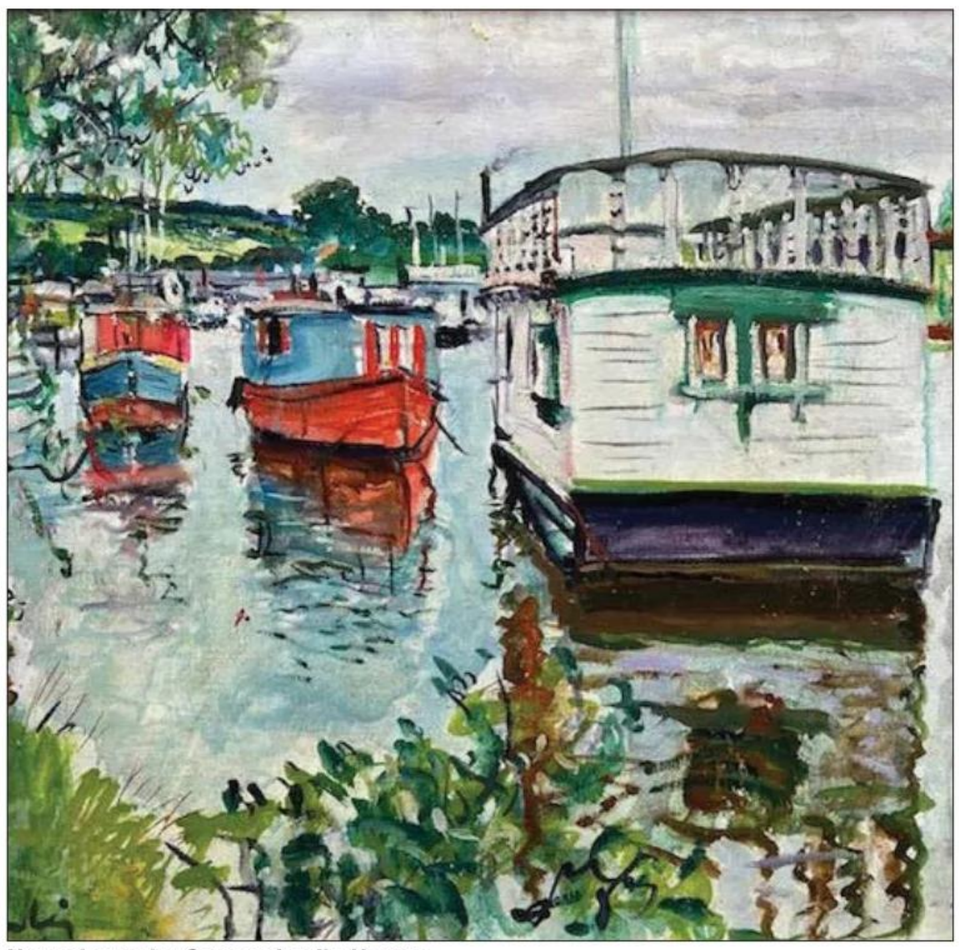
The Range Rover is also accompanied by photographs which show Michael getting in and out of the car, with one snap showcasing the star singing inside the classic four-wheel-drive.

The Range Rover is up for sale on the Trade Classics website.

The Big Read

Peter Shaw has created an extraordinary artistic treasure trove. Now he wants to share it with his community in a gallery with a difference. By Sandra Dick

Peter Shaw with some of the art which he hopes will go on show in a new gallery Picture: Mark F Gibson



Houseboats by George Leslie Hunter

Why a miner's son built a £10m Scottish art collection and wants to give it away

MORE than just miles separated the humble Lanarkshire miners' rows from the well-heeled corridors of the nation's most elite art galleries.

The coal mines – dirty death traps where men grafted in backbreaking misery to power the industrial revolution in return for crumbs from its rich spoils – were no places for dwelling on the fine brushstrokes of an Allan Ramsay or Henry Raeburn.

And the small cottages, crammed with families and held together with rotting timbers and leaky roofs, offered even less in the way of homely comforts, never mind room for fine art or lavish decor.

For Peter Shaw, these humble beginnings – far removed from the elevated world of art and culture – would lay the foundations for the most astounding private collection of Scottish art and an equally astonishing plan to share it with the nation.

The Herald recently revealed the existence of the huge £10m private art collection, gathered over more than three decades and made up of almost 12,000 original Scottish art works, after it emerged its highly secretive owner was considering its future.

Until then, the vast scale of the collection, its quality and the various subsections devoted to often-overlooked areas of Scottish art were known only to him.

The owner had kept his identity tightly under wraps for decades as he used the fortune from a high-profile business deal to quietly accumulate the "finest privately owned collection of Scottish art in the world".

Now, with the collection reaching its natural conclusion, Mr Shaw has decided to reveal why he poured his multi-million-pound windfall into a huge art collection that would help fulfil one, deeply personal ambition: that one day he could share it with the kind of hard-working community he grew up in; his way of paying respect to generations of workers whose toil was often overlooked and whose appreciation of arts and culture dismissed as unsophisticated or even non-existent.

Speaking of his plans to share his collection, Mr Shaw said: "All my collection is kept in safe storage, but I can no longer continue to be a secret collector if I am to achieve my objectives.

"My vision is for a new public art gallery fit for the 21st century. It should be exciting and innovatory, and located outside the established city cultural centres."

Mr Shaw became a chartered accountant and 'accidental millionaire' in summer 1996 when employee-owned Strathclyde Buses was sold in a £110 million deal to its rivals First Bus. The move led to many of the workers within the former council-operated bus company netting as much as £35,000 – roughly £82,000 in today's money.

Delighted bus drivers, engineers and office staff cashed in shares and spent the money on better homes, holidays and new cars.

Meanwhile, Mr Shaw, leader of a group of executives at the bus firm who masterminded the deal, banked millions and, although still just 42, retired.

Rather than indulge in luxuries, he made a pledge to his working-class roots to pay it back.

"My dad, grandfather and great grandfather were all coal miners," he explains. "They were honourable, even heroic, and being of that community gave me a tremendous sense of pride and self-worth.

"The miners suffered many work-related deaths and countless injuries, too often because profits trumped safety for the mine owners."

One of a family of nine children, Mr Shaw grew up in a Bellshill miners' row where landlords' neglect left the homes unsanitary and without basic amenities.

They were also dangerous: he recalls his pregnant mother plunging five feet into the coal cellar when rotten and damp floorboards gave way beneath her feet.

Yet despite "old tropes about the working class", he says families like his found escape in art and books.

"Even today, it is all 'flat caps, booze and betting shops, Woodbine and whippets', and not much else," he says. "But nothing could be further from the truth."

His father played clarinet and after working in the pit would plough through Edward Gibbon's six-volume Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, or the periodical Psychology Today that he had subscribed to.

However, it was a large print of Salvador Dali's Christ of St John of the Cross above the family fireplace which ignited Mr Shaw's love of art.

He bought his first Scottish art in the early 1980s, but the Strathclyde Bus deal in June 1996 accelerated his collection and the idea that he could eventually share it with communities beyond the city-based art elite.

"I had a working-class golden spoon in my mouth, and I was sure as hell not going to spit it out," he adds.

"I decided I would give most of my money back to the ordinary working people who were really the ones responsible for making our country great.

"The decision to pay back was easy, and, fortunately, thanks to my parents' example, so was the method.

"Following my windfall, I had the means, motive, and opportunity to create a valuable cultural asset for my community."

His massive collection includes some of the country's best-known artists, spanning the works of Allan Ramsay to Henry Raeburn, landscapes by Horatio McCulloch and William McTaggart and modern artists such as Peter Howson, Alison Watt and John Byrne.

Alongside work from the Glasgow Boys, Glasgow Girls and Scottish Colourists, is a previously unrecorded oil painting by Alexander Nasmyth of Robert Burns at the Brig o Doon, the setting of Tam o' Shanter.

There is also a significant number of 19th century Scottish works including oil paintings, works which have achieved world-record sums at auction, and familiar names such as E.A. Hornel, Elizabeth Blackadder and Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh, wife of Charles Rennie Mackintosh, appear.

Within the collection are massive subset groups that reflect elements of Scottish art, life and culture.

One of them is a collection of works that provide insight into the attitudes of Scottish artists and patrons towards Black people across two centuries.

Mr Shaw also set out to gather works from areas he felt were under-represented in public galleries, so the collection includes significant groups of work by women artists, Jewish artists with Scottish connections, and war-related art.

Mr Shaw says the collection equates to a "Scottish national arts study centre", with a digital database of 1.5 million images and files on Scottish art that is said to be unrivalled.

Among a comprehensive physical library of Scottish art including books, monographs and literature, is also a comprehensive physical library of Scottish auction catalogues.

There is also a unique digital library of British fashion spanning 400 years which comprises over 70,000 images.

Mr Shaw says his dream is for the collection to be given a modern public gallery in a place that families from his own working class community can easily reach.

"Little has changed in the 200-plus years since Britain's first public art gallery opened," he adds.

"Then, as now, a group of paintings is presented with descriptive label alongside.

"Public galleries often hang the same permanent collection for years while they claim to have an abundance of storeroom riches.

"Major public collections could and should be rotated artworks much more frequently."

Instead, he hopes for a new public gallery which would make use of innovations like projection mapping, augmented and virtual reality, and responsive, sensory and tactile expansions.

As well as celebrating past artistic achievements, it could also provide a platform for rising contemporary artists whose work is rarely given space in traditional public galleries.

"Over 100,000 arts-related students have graduated in Scotland in the last 10 years, with little or no prospect of their work ever being shown," he adds.

"I believe public galleries should have a permanent dedicated space exclusively for new contemporary art."

It's not the first time Mr Shaw has given back through his art: in 2007 he donated the £180,000 proceeds from the sale of an Anne Redpath painting to charity.

May Mathews, managing director of Bonhams Scotland, the only international auction house to hold regular auctions in Scotland, said: "Peter Shaw's collection is, in my view, the finest privately owned collection of Scottish art in the world.

"During my 23 years in the art business, I have not encountered another collector who has pursued the very best examples across such breadth of artists and timeframe.

"From 18th and 19th century works by rare artists such as Peter Taylor, alongside major names including Nasmyth, Wilkie and Raeburn, through to the 19th and 20th centuries with the Glasgow Boys and Girls, the Colourists, and more recent figures such as Agnes Miller Parker, Joan Eardley, Wilhelmina Barns-Graham and Peter Howson.

"Not only is the depth of artists represented impressive, but the quality of the works is exceptional.

"The collection includes many pieces that have achieved world-record prices for their artists, including works by F.C.B. Cadell and G.L. Hunter.

"Through Peter's true connoisseurship and unrivalled knowledge, the collection has deep historical and cultural importance."

Mr Shaw says he hopes that by revealing the scale his collection, a conversation can begin over a new gallery home to showcase it which can also provide social benefits to communities rooted in Scottish industry.

"Ultimately, my dream will become a reality if there is the political will, hopefully on a cross-party basis.

"The hard part (of collecting it) is over, now the even harder part begins."

> "I had a working-class golden spoon in my mouth, and I was sure as hell not going to spit it out

The work of Annie French, one of the Glasgow Girls, is among the paintings

A coast storm scene by W Y MacGregor is included in the art collection

90,000 ducks are dropped into river

Chicago

A DELUGE of 90,000 rubber ducks poured out of a truck and into the Chicago River, then bobbed along a stretch of the skyscraper-lined river in the annual Chicago Ducky Derby that raises thousands of dollars for charity.

The truck dumped the ducks from one side of a half-raised bridge.

After forming a yellow pool in the river, the ducks floated for around 15 minutes before a winner and runner-up were plucked from the water.

The annual event, a fundraiser for Special Olympics Illinois, draws thousands of participants.

At an accompanying festival, participants took pictures with inflatable ducks and doodled on a chalkboard under the prompt: "I adopt a duck because..."

Some sported rubber duck-printed shirts.

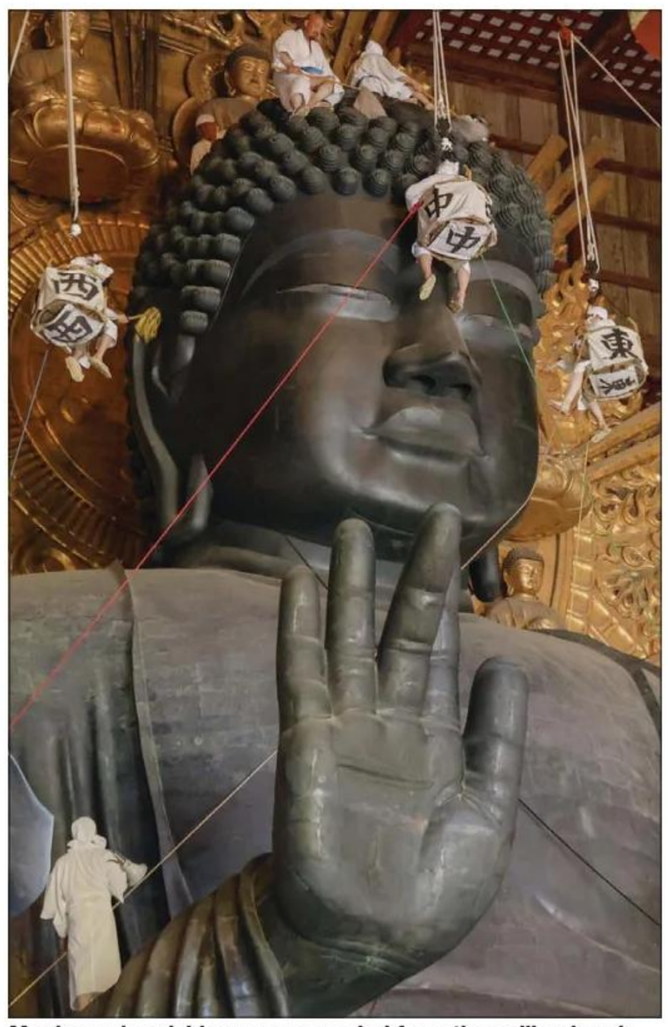
Becky Cavanagh, the Ducky Derby ambassador and a 13-year Special Olympics athlete, held up the winning duck to the cheers of crowds packed on both sides of the river.

Special Olympics Illinois organises competitions across the state for people with disabilities and special needs.

It costs $10 to sponsor a "lone duck", which will feed an athlete lunch at a competition, and $30 for a "quack pack" of six ducks, which supplies gold medals for a team.

The competition raised more than $480,000.

The sponsor of the fastest duck won an SUV, and the runner-up collected $2,500.



Monks and parishioners suspended from the ceiling brush the dust from the giant Buddha statue during the annual Ominugui ceremony at the Todaiji temple in Nara, Japan

A man uses a cooling mist spot on a hot day at the Sensoji Buddhist temple in Tokyo, Japan

Health worker Wiza Bondele, of the prevention and control team fighting an outbreak of Ebola, is seen at work in Ituri province, Congo. He has been working unpaid since May

A ship navigates the Bosphorus in Istanbul, Turkey, after restrictions imposed due to heavy fog were lifted

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Pupil kills his grandparents at their home and then five teachers in school shooting

Bangkok

A 14-YEAR-OLD pupil shot five teachers dead and injured 23 people at a high school outside Thailand's capital after having separately killed his two grandparents.

The shooter, who has not been named, then took his own life by turning the gun on himself.

The shooting happened around 10am local time at Debsirin Nonthaburi School in Nonthaburi province north-west of Bangkok, deputy interior minister Polapee Suwunchwee said.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, speaking after touring the school, said the boy, who lived with his grandparents, had shown signs of stress connected to school.

The gun, described by police as small and compact, was legally registered to his grandfather, he said.

About an hour after the shooting, people stood outside comforting one another as police and first responders walked around the co-educational state school, which has an enrolment of about 3,000 students ranging from 12 to 18 years old.

A witness said pupils hid inside a classroom while they heard gunshots from another building before police knocked on the door and cleared a way for them to leave the building.

Amporn Niamfuang, who owns a restaurant 50 yards from the school, said the narrow road outside her shop quickly filled with fleeing children after the shooting started. "At first I heard just one gunshot, and there was a pause," Ms Amporn said. "And then there were multiple continuous shots."

"Students were running scared and pouring on to the street. Young girls were holding each other's hands and crying. I went inside to hide."

Bangyai Hospital, about three miles from the school, said 23 people were wounded and 10 were in critical condition, with most suffering gunshot wounds.

Earlier reports gave conflicting casualty numbers.

All classes will be suspended until next Friday and school staff are instructed to work from home in that period.

After the shooting, police went to the home of the shooter's grandparents but the door was locked and there was no response to their calls.

Officers broke the door lock and found both grandparents had died of apparent gunshot wounds.

Police spokesman Trairong Piwpan said the boy appeared to have shot his grandparents first before attending school as normal.

After the class had started, the boy began shooting from inside his classroom, before walking out and continuing shooting. He said the boy fired more than 20 shots and more than 30 rounds were found on him after he shot himself.

Relatives of the shooter, including his uncle and sisters of the grandfather who were at the family home while police investigated, said he usually kept to himself and was a good student.

The family said they were unaware of any troubles he faced at home or school.

A schoolgirl cries outside the school after the shootings

Ex-governor arrested over missing students

Mexico City

MEXICAN authorities have detained the former governor of the southern state of Guerrero for his alleged involvement in the disappearance of 43 students in 2014 – a case that has grown to become a symbol of impunity and state involvement in cartel violence.

Prosecutors said they arrested Angel Aguirre on accusations of "concealing evidence to determine the whereabouts of the students" of the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College.

Mr Aguirre governed Guerrero from 2011 until October 2014, one month after the students disappeared. He is one of the highest-profile arrests in the case to date since the detention of former federal attorney general Jesus Murillo Karam, who is facing criminal charges of forced disappearance, obstruction of justice and torture.

Authorities say a drugs cartel in the city of Iguala attacked the students in collusion with security forces and local, state and federal authorities.

Migrants who crossed into Spain from Morocco gather around a bonfire on a beach in the Spanish enclave of Ceuta. Up to 5,000 migrants remain in the territory

A firefighter walks through a charred forest near Blagon, southwest France, during wildfires. The country's south-east is still on blaze alert as temperatures hit over 41C

A Jielong-3 carrier rocket carrying two satellites lifts off from a launch ship off the coast of Haiyang in eastern China's Shandong province

Ukraine drones target warehouse 1,200 miles inside Russian border

Kyiv

UKRAINIAN long-range drones struck a warehouse in the Ural Mountains belonging to Russia's biggest online retailer, more than 1,200 miles from the two countries' border, officials said.

Ukraine has regularly hit targets in the distant Urals this year and has even struck a Russian oil refinery in western Siberia, nearly 1,550 miles from the border.

The attacks are examples of how Kyiv has used drone innovation as a key part of its response to the invasion by its much bigger enemy more than four years ago.

Its successes have drawn international interest and drone co-operation agreements with nine countries, with further deals being negotiated with 15 other countries, according to Kyiv officials.

A Wildberries warehouse in Yekaterinburg, Russia's fourth-largest city, was set ablaze by the attack, the company said.

Most merchandise was not damaged, it said, unlike at some of the more than a dozen other Wildberries depots struck by Ukraine in recent weeks that have burned down.

Kyiv is trying to rattle the Russian public and the Kremlin with the attacks.

The regional governor, Denis Pasler, said three drones hit the warehouse's roof. Artyom Zhoga, the Kremlin's representative in the region, said 800 people were evacuated from the warehouse and nobody was hurt.

Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy is pushing for his country to keep up the pace of technological development, especially in air defence systems to help stop Russian ballistic missiles that are exploiting Ukraine's shortage of American-made Patriot interceptor missiles and battering civilian areas.

A joint European anti-ballistic development programme is already under way, Mr Zelenskyy said, with 10 countries engaged in developing an anti-ballistic shield. Europe is concerned about Moscow's ambitions on the continent beyond Ukraine.

"Ukraine is capable of producing its [anti-ballistic] missile and launcher, while our partners will provide the necessary components and critical elements – radars, sensors, and everything else required," he said on social media. "An anti-ballistic programme of our own – one that is truly large-scale – will greatly benefit everyone in Europe."

Tanks lined up in St Michael's Square, Kyiv

At the same time, Ukraine is working on manufacturing its own ballistic missiles to use against Russia. "The tests have shown strong potential. We need to turn this into a real weapon," Mr Zelenskyy said.

> "The tests have shown strong potential

Ukrainian frontline defences in eastern regions, meanwhile, remain under strain as Russia's bigger army looks for a breakthrough after months of minimal advances that Western analysts and official say have had a high cost for Moscow in troop casualties.

Ukraine has been evacuating children from Kramatorsk, one of the four eastern Donetsk region cities that make up Ukraine's so-called Fortress Belt.

The line of four large and heavily defended cities, about 30 miles long, has been key to denying Moscow its goal of seizing Ukraine's industrial heartland.

The head of the Donetsk region's regional military administration, Vadym Filashkin, said yesterday that more than 800 people, including 91 children, were evacuated over the previous 24 hours.

Ukraine has been deploying mid-range strike drones to disrupt Russia's supply lines and slow its advance.

Mr Zelenskyy said the recently appointed commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian armed forces, Major General Mykhailo Drapatyi, reported to him yesterday about the military situation in Donetsk. He said in a social media post that they reached "an understanding of how to strengthen" Ukraine's defences there but gave no details.

Russia's air defences downed 203 Ukrainian drones from late on Thursday through to the early hours of yesterday, Moscow's defence ministry said.

Meanwhile, Russia attacked Ukraine with 147 long-range strike drones, according to the country's air force.

In Ukraine's northern Sumy region, a Russian drone struck a busy market, injuring 10 people, authorities said.

Russia also said it launched glide bombs and drones of various types at the regional capital.

Meanwhile, Mr Zelenskyy arrived in Serbia last night for his first official visit to the country, one of the few European countries that have maintained friendly relations with Russia despite its invasion of Ukraine. Mr Zelenskyy will meet Serbia's populist president Aleksandar Vucic and prime minister Djuro Macut.

Court orders Trump to stop building $400m ballroom at the White House

Washington, DC

A US appeals court has ordered the Trump administration to halt construction of its $400 million ballroom at the White House without congressional approval.

US President Donald Trump does not have the unilateral authority to construct a 90,000 square feet ballroom where the White House's East Wing stood before he ordered its demolition, according to the decision by a three-judge panel from the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit.

In a 2-1 decision, the court sided with historic preservationists who sued to stop construction.

The court said it would stay its own ruling for two weeks to allow the administration to appeal to the US Supreme Court. "Whether or not a massive ballroom should be constructed is for Congress to decide and is not a matter for executive self-help," the court wrote.

"This holding has nothing at all to do with whether the proposed ballroom is desirable, or not, as a matter of policy. This ruling does not even necessarily mean the defendants may not ultimately construct the ballroom. What it does mean is the defendants may not do so during the district court's expeditious litigation without securing Congress's authorisation, as the Constitution and laws require."

The panel upheld an April 16 order from US district judge Richard Leon for the administration to halt above-ground work on the ballroom.

Judge Leon allowed construction to continue on below-ground work on a bunker and other "national security facilities" at the site.

Government lawyers have argued that the project – the biggest structural change to the White House in more than 70 years – includes critical security features to guard against a range of threats, such as drones, ballistic missiles and biohazards.

In Brief

Teenager 'dressed as clown kills stranger'

St Louis

A 15-YEAR-OLD boy accused of dressing as a clown and randomly stabbing a man to death at a bus stop has been charged with murder, US authorities said.

Video of the suspect showed him dressed in a clown costume, Illinois State Police said.

Police in East St Louis, Illinois, found the body of 78-year-old John W Allen of Jennings, Missouri, in a street on Monday. Officers quickly identified a suspect and later arrested him.

The teenager, whose name has not been released, has been charged with first-degree murder.

Colombo

THREE inmates were killed and more than 20 injured in two separate prison clashes in Sri Lanka.

Public security minister Ananda Wijepala told the country's parliament yesterday that one inmate died at Colombo Magazine Prison in the capital Colombo late on Thursday when about 40 prisoners clashed after breaking out of their cells.

Two inmates died yesterday morning at Kuruwita Prison, about 50 miles from the capital.

Between the two incidents, 23 inmates were injured and admitted to hospitals. The violence was said to be related to drug dealers and rival criminal gangs.

Antarctica

AN Australian air crew flew an American from an Antarctic base to a New Zealand hospital in a rare midwinter rescue.

The Airbus A319 Long Range aircraft, with the call sign Snowbird 1, flew from the Australian city of Hobart to the US McMurdo Station in Antarctica in response to an "urgent request for assistance", the jet's Melbourne-based owner Skytraders said.

The jet landed after a five-hour and 30-minute flight at the Phoenix Airfield near McMurdo in darkness and with temperatures as low as minus 43C.

The American was flown on the same day to a hospital in Christchurch as weather conditions at the Antarctic air strip worsened. New Zealand's Health Ministry would not comment on the patient's condition.

Santa Fe

A COURT in New Mexico, US, has ordered Instagram and Facebook's parent company Meta to pay another $567 million (£421m) to address harms to young people from its platforms in the second phase of a landmark trial the social media giant lost in March.

Judge Bryan Biedscheid said the bulk of the money – $420m (£312m) – will be used for treatment services for young people. The rest will go toward awareness and prevention, screening services and other costs over the next five years.

In the first phase, jurors ordered $375m (£278m) in civil penalties against Meta. The firm is to appeal the ruling.

Vinhedo

BRAZIL'S federal police have formally accused 16 current and former employees of airline Voepass over the August 9, 2024 plane crash that killed all 62 people on board.

Investigators named several acts of alleged malpractice, omission and negligence by the firm.

Voepass owner and president Jose Luiz Felicio Filho was among those accused over the accident that took place in the city of Vinhedo, outside Sao Paulo. It happened when an ATR 72-500 twin-engine turboprop en route plummeted 13,000ft into the back yard of a gated condominium, killing 58 passengers and four crew.

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This leadership contest is too early for Scottish Labour, but change can't wait

BRIAN TAYLOR

'Scottish Labour is immersed in a leadership contest, but rather than cool contemplation, it faces the prospect of a heated debate' Picture: PA

TIME is frequently the enemy of politicians. They may yearn for a period of calm reflection – but the political calendar demands action. That is amply true in government – but it is also the case in opposition, as Scottish Labour is discovering.

In truth, their leadership contest has arisen far too early. They need to examine, quietly and thoughtfully, the reasons for their Holyrood defeat in May. If possible, they need to do so without rancour or recrimination.

Instead, they are immersed in a leadership contest, created by the departure of Anas Sarwar to the Lords and UK ministerial office. Rather than cool contemplation, they face the prospect of a heated debate – where one hopeful, Monica Lennon, says the party risks facing "oblivion" unless there is radical change.

Scarcely ideal. I spoke to several senior insiders this week. The general view was that this leadership battle had arrived perhaps 18 months too early.

But these things. As a broadcast journalist, I am only too well aware of the hazards of the deadline. You are obliged to go on air with what you have. It is futile to plead for a few more minutes from time's winged chariot.

So I sympathise with politicians whose lives are driven by time constraints. And perhaps the temperature of Labour's post-election contemplation would have been high in any case. Yes, there has been a "Burnham bounce" – but it is limited.

No political party has a guaranteed right to attract support. Or even to exist. They rise, they fall. The only fixed factor is change.

In the mid-19th century, those Scots who were permitted to vote mostly opted for the Liberals, who registered peak support of 85.4% in 1865. Just think what Alex Cole-Hamilton would do with that now.

Go back further, to the pre-Union Scottish Parliament. The chief groupings then were the Court Party, the Country Party – and the gloriously named Squadrone Volante. Myself, I think they should make a comeback.

OK, enough of the history lesson. I only trot this stuff out to make the point that the past matters for political parties. Scottish Labour is hamstrung by the collective memory that it used to dominate politics north of the Border – and is now reduced to a rump at Holyrood, plaintively struggling to be heard. (The mighty Dundee United face the same dilemma with fans reliving the 1980s.)

So the talk in Scottish Labour circles is of renewal. But, to do so, they need authentic analysis. They need to confront the true state of affairs, not a comforting pseudo-narrative.

Point one. Labour's previous dominance in Scotland was impressive but not overwhelming like those 19th-century Liberals. Labour mopped up seats in the central belt under first past the post – but never achieved a popular majority in votes. The only party to do that, post-universal suffrage, was...? An ice lolly to the reader who said the Tories. In 1955, when they were called the Unionists.

Point two. Sir Keir Starmer won convincingly in 2024 – but largely owning to voters fleeing the Tories. Point three. Starmer lost the 2026 Holyrood election for Scottish Labour. Anas Sarwar disowned him at the outset of the campaign – but he stayed put and continued to infuriate the electorate in Scotland.

Which matters in this current contest. Michael Marra helped craft the 2026 manifesto – and is now standing to replace Anas Sarwar.

That link with an ultimately unsuccessful election campaign is, on the face of it, a negative for Marra.

Supporters of his rival, Joe Fagan, argue that the party needed to adopt a more provocative, ambitious approach to combat voter disaffection, particularly in the light of the discontent with Starmer.

The point is made. However, I do not see that dispute going too far. For one thing, Michael Marra makes no effort to defend the 2026 performance. To the contrary, he says Scottish Labour needs complete renewal to rediscover what he calls a "moral purpose".

For another, Team Fagan insist they are also focused upon the future.

They do not intend, one told me, to "drip poison" into the campaign. Not least because the eventual winner will have to work closely with defeated rivals in a Parliamentary group that now numbers just 17.

Intriguingly, though, Joe Fagan – who is a Holyrood newcomer – has previously argued that "continuity won't cut it", an apparent attempt to move away from the team who directed this May's election.

It is equally intriguing to note that this was the phrase used by Kate Forbes when she tried to defeat Humza Yousaf in the 2023 SNP leadership election.

It didn't work for her – and I wonder whether it is entirely germane this time around. Not sure Michael Marra quite fits as representing the party establishment. Nor is Joe Fagan – who led a large council – a political novice.

Rather, this week, the debate has usefully moved on. What can Labour do now? Ms Lennon urges a "big tent" open debate, "unleashing every talent" in the party, while decrying what she sees as "misogyny and male entitlement" in the contest.

Michael Marra also argues for change, noting that Labour has gone into reverse in successive Holyrood elections, not just this one. Joe Fagan argues that the party needs reform to enable wider membership involvement and a clearer connection with struggling communities.

It strikes me that Labour faces a range of challenges. Firstly, the party needs to find a new voice in Holyrood and on the doorsteps.

Less performative politics, less bogus indignation at anything and everything the SNP does. More grounded policies, more readiness to work within Holyrood arithmetic.

Which leads to the second point. Labour legislated for the Scottish Parliament – but never owned it. To change their lowly status at Holyrood, they need to acknowledge it.

Thirdly, they need to rebuild the shattered trust of their former proletarian power base. All the candidates stress that. One Fagan supporter told me Labour had been "hammered among the working class".

Within Scottish Labour, anger is understandable. But insufficient to save a political party. Just ask the Squadrone Volante.

LESSONS TO LEARN

Biggest gaps in exam results are the ones you never hear about

JAMES MCENANEY

More than 131,000 people sat exams in over 460 schools, colleges and training centres

BY many measures, 2026 was a good year for exam results: pass rates slightly increased, the attainment gap between rich and poor slightly declined, and we got through the whole thing without any displays of incompetence from the exam board.

Yet there are plenty of caveats.

Those pass-rate attainment gaps are still higher than they were during the pre-pandemic period of 2016-19, and they are, of course, massively higher than they were in 2020, when Covid-19 forced the powers that be to allow a much fairer system to be put in place.

In one year without high-stakes, one-off, end-of-year exams, attainment gaps were more than cut in half, opening up opportunities to young people who always deserved them, but had them withheld. Presumably those from the poorest areas will have to wait until the next pandemic before getting that sort of fairness again.

The pass rate gap between the most and least deprived students is not the only one we can see in the data. In some ways, it might not even be the most important one.

As well as data on the total percentage of pupils passing each course – which means achieving an A, B, or C grade – the exam board also releases information on how many students gain each individual grade.

At National 5, 27.4% of grades to those from the poorest areas were As. The corresponding figure for those in the wealthiest areas was 53.5% – a gap of 26.1 percentage points.

At Higher, fewer than 20% of grades for those from the poorest areas were As, against more than 40% for affluent pupils. The gap at this level is 21.5 percentage points. At Advanced Higher, even though the gap is smaller, it is still 16.8 percentage points.

At all three levels, those from the most deprived areas are more likely to fail their exams than they are to achieve an A, whereas for those from the most affluent areas, an A is the most common award.

These gaps, which are much higher than the pass-rate gaps that gain so much attention, are rarely mentioned, but they have an obvious impact on young people trying to take the next step in their lives. If it matters that those from deprived backgrounds are being held back in terms of passing courses, surely the same applies to their chances of getting the top grades, given that they are having to compete for things such as university places and job opportunities where grades, not just passes, may be the deciding factor.

The deprivation gaps are not the only divides for us to be concerned about.

In secondary schools, around half of pupils have additional support needs (ASN), but these young people account for just 40.5% of National 5 students, 36.9% of Higher students, and 34.2% of Advanced Higher students. What's more, deprived pupils who do manage to make it on to these courses have a lower chance of passing, and of achieving an A, than those who do not require additional support.

The principle of Scotland's inclusive system is that those with additional needs can have them met in mainstream classes, and that they can therefore achieve on an equal footing, but if that were always the case, then the glaring ASN attainment gaps surely would not exist.

A similar pattern emerges for pupils with disabilities. They make up around 5% of the secondary school pupil cohort, but account for just 3% of N5, 2.7% of Higher, and 2.1% of Advanced Higher students, while also recording lower pass rates and lower rates of attaining A grades.

There are also big gaps when you break down the data based on geographical location. For example, the National 5 pass rate for pupils from "remote small towns" (places such as Tain, Oban, Girvan, Kelso and Aviemore) is 10 percentage points lower than it is for those living in "accessible rural" parts of the country.

Despite all the talk about "keeping the promise", we don't have up-to-date, or even complete, information for pupils who are in or have been in care, but the figures that are available reveal massive attainment gaps for this group too. While nearly 85% of school leavers last year had attained at least one level 5 qualification (such as a National 5), the figure for care-experienced leavers was just under 40%, and things are significantly worse for Highers and Advanced Highers.

Then there are the gender gaps.

There are slightly more male pupils than female on National 5 courses, but this is then reversed for Higher and Advanced Higher levels, where girls make up 53.6% and 57.1% of respective cohorts.

Across all three levels of exams, girls are more likely to pass courses and more likely to achieve As than their male peers. Those gaps tend to have been stable, or even to have increased, over the last few years.

Overall, exam results day 2026 was positive, but if you scratch even a tiny bit below the surface things look a lot less rosy.

While none of these gaps is likely to show up in Scottish Government press releases or Qualifications Scotland social media posts, the children affected by them still deserve better.

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STUART NICOLSON

Why Scotland must scrutinise the devolution plans of new man in No 10

Andy Burnham and wife Marie-France outside No 10 after he became PM

IN summer 2022, a slightly strange story appeared in the pages of several Scottish national newspapers.

The gist of it was that Andy Burnham, then mayor of Greater Manchester, had been "snubbed" by the then first minister Nicola Sturgeon who, so the tale went, had failed to take him up on his offer to meet while he was visiting Scotland to appear at the Edinburgh Fringe.

It was odd for the simple reason it wasn't true, which was made clear to those who cared to check with the Scottish Government team responsible for responding to media queries, of which I was then part. An approach for a meeting had been made and the First Minister's office was in the process of fixing a date, but the "snub" story ran in various places regardless.

Whether it was the result of briefing from the mayor's team, eager to pick a fight with a Scottish administration with which Mr Burnham had the previous year concocted a needless spat over Covid-19 restrictions, or whether it was just crossed wires may never be entirely clear.

In any case, a meeting between the first minister and Mr Burnham was arranged. In it, the mayor displayed what can perhaps charitably be described as a rudimentary grasp of devolution arrangements pertaining to Scotland. For example, when it was explained that post-Brexit strictures were having a deeply harmful effect, especially in areas such as recruitment for positions in social care and hospitality, Mr Burnham appeared surprised to learn Holyrood had no control over immigration policy.

The episode is worth recounting now that Mr Burnham has arrived in 10 Downing Street, feted as Labour's saviour, with a professed zeal for devolution at all levels, a passion burnished by his years of developing what we are supposed to call "Manchesterism".

To give Mr Burnham his due, he is right about the need to fundamentally rebalance the UK to address the social, economic and structural inequities that have grown and continue to be fuelled by the overweening pull and power of London.

However, as that meeting in Edinburgh four years ago suggests, his grasp of the detail around devolution may not match the warm words.

It's not just in Scotland. Mr Burnham's efforts to spell out what his premiership might mean for Wales saw him offer some thoughts that were met with confusion and not a little irritation in the Principality. In what has been described as an "error-filled" article, the new Prime Minister spelled out how he wanted to take action in policy areas such as housing, education and business rates, all of which are controlled by the Welsh government, not Westminster.

Mr Burnham offered essentially the same opinion piece to Scotland and London, with place names and a few other details tweaked.

This apparent gap between rhetoric and a firm grasp of the facts around where power lies is relevant when it comes to the question of what a Burnham premiership might mean for Scotland, for his own party's fortunes north of the Border, especially under soon-to-be new leadership, and for the state of relations between administrations in Edinburgh and London.

It has become a stock argument for opposition parties at Holyrood, particularly Labour, that power is too centralised in Edinburgh. But, in a Scotland already heavily governed at multiple levels, these parties are surely kidding themselves if they believe there is any genuine clamour from across the nation for elected mayors, bringing yet another layer of government and still more elections.

> "His grasp of the detail around devolution may not match the warm words

While decentralising power to as local a level as practicable makes good sense in any country, in Scotland, as is so often the case, wider politics are at play. For every sincere argument put forward in support of more local democracy, it is easy to detect alongside it some more base political motives lurking.

Unable to dislodge the incumbent administration through multiple elections stretching over two whole decades and counting, it is clear some see the "devolution within devolution" argument as the best or only means they have of hobbling or impeding a Holyrood government they cannot beat at the ballot box.

Leaving aside the most obvious flaw in the plan, namely that there is no reason to assume the elected mayors returned would be of their political choosing or liking, these advocates of taking powers away from Holyrood play up the notion, embraced and amplified by Mr Burnham, that people across Scotland see Edinburgh government as every bit as remote and disconnected as they do Westminster.

The facts suggest otherwise. The most recently available analysis, in the shape of the Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, shows that people's trust in the Scottish Government to work in Scotland's best interests, all or most of the time, is nearly three times higher than their trust in the UK Government to do likewise.

The arrival of Mr Burnham in Downing Street heralds the advent of what one of my former Scottish Government colleagues has neatly described as "the news where you are" governance, a mindset that plays up regionalism while simultaneously regarding Scotland as not much more than a county.

The new PM would do better to commit to a genuine respect agenda, one that recognises, among other things, the power to decide how best to govern Scotland at local level has already been devolved to Edinburgh for more than a quarter of a century.

Stuart Nicolson is a former Scottish Government adviser and First Minister's spokesman

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UNSPUN

HANNAH BROWN

Spy glasses and their emerging threat in Scotland

When Orwell's telescreens learned to walk: Scotland and the threat of spy glasses

THE deepest horror in George Orwell's 1984 was not surveillance technology itself, but what permanent observation did to privacy, intimacy and human feeling. Smart glasses pose a similar destructive threat in Scotland's public spaces.

To me, 1984 has always been one of literature's most devastating romantic tragedies.

Its horror lies not only in the Thought Police, Newspeak or the telescreens. It lies in what constant observation eventually destroys: privacy, trust, intimacy and, most crucially, the capacity to love.

Winston and Julia briefly find a forbidden paradise in one another. When their relationship is found out, the Party does not consider it sufficient to monitor or punish them. It must enter the private territory between them and empty it out.

"We shall squeeze you empty," O'Brien tells Winston, "and then we shall fill you with ourselves."

I can hear the ever-present whisper of AI call out to me when I read that now.

In a world where critical thinking is being held at gunpoint by the pressure to "keep up with the modern world" and to "just ask Chat", I can feel the gruesome fingers of a dystopia Orwell warned us about all those years ago tighten around my neck.

And then came the dawn (or donning) of the Meta glasses.

Police Scotland is currently assessing videos posted by TikToker Scott Margerison after complaints about footage recorded using Meta smart glasses during a trip around Scotland. The force said it was reviewing the material to establish whether any criminality was involved.

Now, Orwell did not imagine a camera hidden inside an ordinary pair of glasses. His telescreens were fixed to walls and controlled by the state. The contemporary version is mobile, privately owned and capable of broadcasting an encounter to millions.

And being secretly filmed by an influencer is not necessarily totalitarian persecution.

But Orwell understood that when people cannot know whether an ordinary exchange is private, spontaneous interaction begins to disappear and turns into something much more insidious.

A conversation with a waiter, shopkeeper or fellow passenger is no longer simply an encounter. It may now be an audition conducted without consent, with one participant holding the camera and the other unknowingly supplying the content.

That is the question smart glasses now place before Scotland. Not whether cameras can be banned from public life, but whether the law should distinguish ordinary observation from the covert targeting of a person for entertainment, humiliation and profit. The defenders of smart glasses will say this is an overreaction. Cameras have been in public spaces for decades. Most people carry one in their pocket. We are filmed by CCTV, dashcams and doorbells before we have even finished breakfast.

But smart glasses change that dynamic.

A phone camera is visible. It can be challenged, avoided or, at the very least, recognised. A person holding a phone up to film you is making a choice that you can see. You may not be able to stop them, but you know the encounter has changed.

Smart glasses remove even that small measure of agency. They turn the wearer's gaze into a potential recording device while allowing them to appear to be doing nothing more than looking at you.

Some might think that they can identify smart glasses from normal glasses, but can you in all circumstances?

You can now cover the small light and camera with tape. I've seen social media videos on this. A "how to" guide on how to be more subtle with your creepiness, so to speak.

The person filmed may become a character in somebody else's story: the awkward customer, the angry worker, the woman on the street, the stranger whose reaction can be clipped, captioned and shared. A few seconds of an encounter can be edited into a performance for an audience that neither knows nor cares who the person on screen really is.

And the rewards do not necessarily go to the person who has been filmed. They go to the person who owns the account, controls the edit and collects the views.

This is particularly unsettling for people whose jobs require them to deal with the public. Shop staff, bar workers, ferry workers and waiters cannot always walk away from an interaction that turns uncomfortable. They are expected to remain civil, helpful and calm, even when they are being baited, mocked or secretly recorded.

For women, the risk can be still more immediate. A camera hidden in a pair of glasses gives a stranger the power to sexualise an encounter without announcing what they are doing. By the time a woman realises she has been filmed, the footage may already have been posted, shared with friends, copied or turned into content.

The fact that these encounters happen in public should not end the argument. Public life requires a degree of openness. It does not require us to accept that every interaction with a stranger is available for commercial extraction.

There is an important distinction between recording in the public interest and recording people because their discomfort might perform well online. Journalism, protest, evidence-gathering and legitimate public accountability all depend, at times, on filming. Any response to smart glasses must protect those freedoms.

That is not an argument for pretending all recording is equal. Yes, some recordings are more equal than others, the pigs in George Orwell's Animal Farm squeal.

There is a difference between documenting wrongdoing and deliberately creating it.

There is a difference between a journalist recording a matter of public concern and an influencer provoking a reaction from a worker who cannot leave. And there is a difference between sharing a private memory and building a revenue stream from unsuspecting strangers.

Data-protection rules may apply when identifiable people are recorded and their footage is used commercially. But the boundary between personal social-media use and an income-generating operation remains uncertain.

That uncertainty is precisely where exploitation flourishes.

Scotland cannot rewrite UK data-protection law or take control of its enforcement.

But the Scottish Parliament is not wholly without options. Privacy, civil remedies and criminal law raise different questions, and Scotland should be asking whether people have adequate protection when covert filming is used to humiliate, sexualise or profit from them.

The answer should not be to ban technology simply because it is new. Orwell's warning was not that a particular machine would destroy us. It was that absolute control could hollow out human feeling, private life and individuality.

Smart glasses ask whether we are willing to accept a smaller, commercial version of that intrusion: the assumption that any stranger might be content, any reaction might be monetised and any ordinary exchange might be watched by an invisible audience.

The danger is not that every person wearing smart glasses is Big Brother. It is that we may begin to behave as if Big Brother is always nearby. We may become more guarded, less spontaneous and less willing to trust the people around us.

Orwell's most chilling image was not the telescreen itself, but O'Brien's promise to Winston: "We shall squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you with ourselves."

Scotland should not wait until ordinary public life has been squeezed empty of ease, dignity and consent before deciding that people deserve stronger protection from covert filming.

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BUSINESS WEEK

Company collapsed leaving homes half-built

BRIAN DONNELLY

A SCOTTISH housebuilder was placed into administration leaving homes at "various stages of completion" and owing more than £4 million.

A new report reveals an unusual event involving two homes that were already completed that "rendered the properties unsellable" at the time.

A member of the public is alleged to have crashed a vehicle into the two homes and this collision is cited in the report on the collapse of JAB Property Development Limited.

The firm was redeveloping the former Rozelle Nursing Home in Ayr into 11 homes.

Kevin Mapstone of BTG, formerly Begbies Traynor, said: "At the time of the appointment of the administrator, the development consisted of 11 plots at various stages of completion, all of which required funding from the lender in order for the works to be completed, approved by Building Control and subsequently sold."

He said in the update that plots one, two, nine and 10 are now fully complete, with certificates issued.

During the reporting period, from December to June, the sale of plot two was completed and the property is now occupied.

The sales of plots one, six, nine and 10 "will all take place in the next reporting period and further information regarding them will be provided in due course".

The administrator also said: "The construction works on plot six have now completed but certification still required to allow the imminent sale to conclude.

"Likewise, plot seven requires some cosmetic works to be finished prior to the completion application being submitted.

"While the majority of works are complete on plot 11, there are ongoing external works which need to be rectified before Building Control completion can be sought."

He said in the update of July 29 that refurbishment works to plot eight "remain ongoing" and for plots three, four and five, "internal strip out and clearance works have now taken place and roof replacement works will shortly commence".

Mr Mapstone also said the company had been "trading at a loss for some time".

"Accordingly," he said, "the directors approached Begbies Traynor seeking advice on the company's financial position and the options available.

"On reviewing the company's assets, liabilities and cash flow, it was evident that the company was cash flow insolvent, which was why the directors sought to progress with an administration petition."

He added: "It was determined that if the company's work in progress could be completed and sold, then this would greatly enhance the creditors' position in comparison to a liquidation scenario."

The company owed a total over £4.2m including around £2m to unsecured creditors.

At the time of the administration in June 2025, Mr Mapstone said the company's land and buildings had an estimated gross development value of £2.85m to £3.1m.

BTG said: "We consider there are likely to be insufficient funds to enable a dividend to be paid to unsecured creditors because after a distribution to the secured creditor, the funds realised will be insufficient to cover the expenses of the administration."

An insurance claim "in respect of the damage caused to the site by the road traffic accident involving a member of the public" was launched. There were exceptional additional circumstances surrounding the collapse of the developer, and the margin between being able to build a small development, making use of buildings no longer employed and failing is thin.

Onshore wind blows strong to help cut bills and create jobs

GEORGE BAXTER

"AT some point in the 21st century, all homes will be zero carbon. At some point in this century, all buildings of any kind will be zero carbon... All cars will be zero carbon, all public transport will be zero carbon. The question is: when? And surely the places that embrace those things first are putting themselves in a position of economic strength when it comes to facing up to the future. Rather than seeing the whole agenda as a burden, we've got to see it for the benefits that it can bring."

Well said, Andy Burnham. We have all the green, clean, renewable and energy storage technology and resources needed to drive the whole economy and benefit every single postcode. As we see the climate crisis unfold in the raw, now is the time to get on with it, build the wind and solar projects, the grid network, the flexible power plants and the storage needed, and face down those ne'er-do-wells who want to slow it down.

In stark contrast to the zealotry of the People's Front of Net Stupid Zero, with their comedic "what has renewable energy ever done for us", onshore wind has kept energy prices lower than they would otherwise have been. Every postcode gained. According to a 2025 University College London study, the net result of wind energy for consumers was a reduction of £104.3 billion in UK energy bills over a 13-year period.

As recent analysis by Aurora Energy Research finds, increasing ambitions in the UK Strategic Spatial Energy Plan for Scottish onshore wind after 2030 would deliver a cheaper energy system for UK consumers by up to £5bn a year and accelerate progress towards energy security.

Onshore renewable energy is already bringing benefits to those rural and far-flung postcodes where a lot of the richest renewable resources are located. Sure, there is more to do to ensure the low cost of renewables is felt more directly, in the north in particular, but energy market and regulatory failings that are being, or can be, fixed should not be turned into childish attacks on renewable energy technology.

Onshore wind contributes an estimated £55 million to Scottish communities in local benefit payments every year, and that figure is growing. No other sector is expected to do this.

Business rates in Scotland from onshore wind alone amount to £110m annually.

The overall spend on an onshore wind farm through its lifetime is well over 50% within the Scottish economy.

The combined total tax paid across corporation tax, employee income tax and national insurance contributions by the Scottish onshore wind sector is between £650m and £850m per year.

With a highly competitive Contract For Difference regime driving the cost of energy to be as low as possible, new onshore wind profits are modest, lower than counterparts in continental Europe and typically around a net 6-8% return on investment. Pension funds particularly like this long-term, stable return.

The low-carbon and renewable energy sector in Scotland is estimated to support more than 105,000 jobs, with direct jobs around 36,000 according to the Scottish Trades Union Congress, compared with an estimated 23,000 direct jobs in the country's oil and gas sector.

The net-zero sector also adds £10.2bn in gross value added to the Scottish economy, underpinned by more than 23,500 businesses across the UK, over 96% of which are small or medium-sized enterprises.

It is not renewables that keep consumer costs high – it is fossil gas. Neither are "constraint payments", which are caused by a lack of grid capacity and will reduce further as grid and storage projects are built and electricity demand rises. Fossil gas accounts for 70% of constraint costs across the UK.

A study by the UK Climate Change Committee found the total additional cost of a single fossil fuel price spike of 2022 magnitude is likely to be as large as the total net additional cost of meeting the pathway to net zero across every year to 2050.

These are big numbers and major economic opportunities, but even small numbers of jobs in remote rural areas can make a hugely positive impact. I recall a senior council official once saying that even a modest wind farm in the Highlands is on a par with a Ravenscraig in the central belt in terms of the relative socioeconomic impact – keeping a local school open, supporting a local shop, keeping local services running, the things that hold a community together. That has always stuck with me. Repeated studies also show local acceptance and support for wind farms increase significantly once projects are in operation, a damning indictment of those who use fear and alarm, typically coupled with misinformation, to whip up opposition.

I recall with fondness, back in 2013, at a public inquiry into the Strathy South Wind Farm, on Sutherland's north coast, there was a demonstration of local people outside in support. They had experienced the benefits of Strathy North and they wanted more of it.

"How can this be? This isn't the story I was sent to get," said one journalist.

The energy transition is well under way across the globe. Calls to "slow it down" only serve to deny jobs for those stuck on the fossil fuel rollercoaster.

Prime Minister Burnham's agenda of devolving power and wealth from the south to the north, and ensuring the economic benefits of local developments are felt directly by people, is exemplified by the story of Scottish onshore wind. Not perfect by any means, but let's not see imperfection as a reason to bash renewables for the benefit of fossil fuels (or nuclear).

The political economy of centralised energy production has long been a story of concentrated corporate power and control, be it in coal, in oil and gas fields in the North Sea and the Middle East, or in uranium deposits in Greenland and Kazakhstan.

One of the brilliant things about renewable energy is that no corporation or aggressive nation state can control the wind and the sun. It is in all of our backyards. Light lands on all our roofs. It does not concentrate reliance in the way we have seen with discarded mining communities, Aberdeen's oil and gas supply chain, or around Grangemouth, for example. Although nuclear workers have more time to adapt to a clean energy future, as hundreds are needed for decades for the decommissioning, clean-up and containment of highly radioactive waste. Renewable energy offers a means of distributing wealth and power unlike any other.

Mr Burnham's vision is particularly resonant and renewables can be the key. If business rates were localised too, those benefits would flow on top of community benefit funds and local jobs. Add in shared ownership of commercial projects, alongside rebalancing the plainly wrong practice of charging people more for energy the further north they are, and Mr Burnham's agenda, coupled with onshore wind and solar, would transform the lot of the north.

First stop is to intervene in the UK Strategic Spatial Energy Plan and ensure Scotland's interests and the full potential of Scottish onshore wind are properly represented. Mr Burnham and First Minister John Swinney need to get that right.

George Baxter is director of GreenPower

Onshore wind contributes an estimated £55 million to Scottish communities in local benefit payments every year

THE DIARY

Holiday time as Burnham blows the joint for an early break

LORNE JACKSON

ANDY Burnham, the longstanding Prime Minister of the UK (two weeks... and counting!) has hopped off on holiday, no doubt a reward for all the good work he's already completed behind the door of Number 10.

(Apparently he bought a brand new pencil case which he has placed on his desk. When he returns from holiday, he may even fill it with pencils.)

Reader William Summers says: "When I ran my own business, one chap arrived for a job interview. Before I could fire any questions at him, he demanded to know how many weeks holiday I was offering."

William told him five.

"Oh, that's not enough," snorted the outraged interviewee. "I'd hardly have time to top up my tan."

Weighty discussion

LAST week, John Mulholland travelled back home to Stornoway from Glasgow on his usual Loganair flight.

WhilE waiting in the queue, the woman in front of him was checking in her luggage, and this vignette unfolded...

Check-in clerk: You're 6 kilograms over and will need to take some items out of your case or pay £30.

Passenger: What's that in lbs... is it about 13lbs?

Check-in clerk: No, it's £30.

Passenger: No, I'm old school and I can only visualise weight in pounds and ounces. So 6kg is how many pounds?

Check-in clerk: It doesn't matter how much you're over, it's still £30.

The passenger duly paid £30 for excess baggage, and the check-in clerk was none the wiser that they'd both been talking about different pounds.

PM or not PM, that is the question...

YOU just can't get away from politics nowadays.

Robin Gilmour from Milngavie overheard a grandfather say to a scruffy grandson: "If you stop wearing that dirty black T-shirt, Andy, and maybe wear a nice suit, there isn't a reason in the world that you couldn't become the next Prime Minister of our wonderful country."

"Okay, grandad," replied the youth, "but maybe I'll wait until I'm in my fifties."

A moderate proposal

"EVERYTHING in moderation," said reader Aaron Doyle, to his son.

"Everything in moderation?" replied Aaron's son, contemplatively, before adding, "and does that include moderation?"

Toilet trouble

FORMER merchant navy chap Joe Wilson once sailed on a ship where the captain's toilet became blocked, in an incident which was forever afterwards described as the Captain's Log.

Cold calling

THOUGHT for the day from constant traveller Hugh Stockman, who says: "In Norway, there's a town called Hell. And, yes, during winter it does freeze over."

Wellington witterings from a clueless Canadian critic

GLASGOW'S Duke of Wellington statue is an icon of the art world.

Though it transpires that not everyone knows the history of the Duke and his dinky traffic cone hat.

Ben Scott took a visiting cousin from Canada to bask upon the glorious vision, inspiring the cousin to say: "So, did the sculptor make the cone as well, or was that added by another artist at a later date?"

Home for the hols

REACHING her 80th birthday, Sue Wade from Ayr got a lovely surprise in the form of a promised pay rise in her state pension.

"Maldives here I come," chuckled Sue.

Alas, the pay rise was only for a measly £13 a year, and the latest missive she received from the government informed Sue that her total tax-free annual amount has now been reduced by £9 per year.

"The administration involved in this process no doubt cost more," sighs Sue.

"I understand that young folk these days feel we receive too much in pension payments, but they need to be fully informed about how the system works."

Adds Sue: "Staycation it is, then."

MARK SMITH

The 'Glasgow bias': is it really a thing?

Deputy First Minister Jenny Gilruth during a visit to the site of the Princes Street fire

I WAS standing in an unflattering hard hat in the middle of George Square the other day with Glasgow City Council leader Susan Aitken, watching a 160-year-old bronze statue of a long-dead prince being lowered on to a big slab of granite on what is, and what will be for some time yet, an unprepossessing building site. It was genuinely one of the most exciting moments of the year so far. Ms Aitken thought so too. "No-one alive has seen anything like this," she said.

Ms Aitken was referring, in particular, to the excellent condition of Prince Albert and the other statues, which were removed from the square last year and have now been renovated and are in the best nick they've been in since they were erected in the 1860s. Ms Aitken said the reinstatement of the statues would give people a sense that the renovation of the square was coming together and show them what it's been for and that it's been worth it: the disruption, the delays. And I agree with her: this is proper investment – about £20 million – properly done, with, I hope, in the end, a proper square to show for it.

The leader of the council standing in front of the bronze prince on his bronze horse and telling a positive story about the city was also a welcome contrast to a few weeks ago when she was standing in front of the blackened remains of Union Street the day after the fire in March.

"This is not a good morning for Glasgow," she said, smoke rising into the sky behind her. She also said the First Minister had been in touch and told her Glasgow would not be left to deal with the issue on its own. "This has to be a national effort," she said.

It turned out the First Minister was as good as his word when it was announced the Scottish Government would underwrite the cost of clearing the site and establish a £10m fund to support the businesses wiped out by the fire. Shona Robison, then the minister for local government, said that, as soon as the full impact of the fire became clear, the government was committed to supporting the long-term recovery. Good for them.

However, just a few weeks later, Edinburgh – jealous perhaps of Glasgow's title as Scotland's foremost city of burning buildings – was the scene of a blaze at the old Debenham's on Princes Street. It has caused a lot of disruption, and part of the street is still closed, but the government was on the case again when it announced this week that there would be £5m to help the area recover. This time, it was Deputy FM Jenny Gilruth's turn to offer words of reassurance in front of a charred ruin. "We know that communities, particularly in Leith and at The Shore, have been affected by this," she said, "so it's really important that we can provide that support."

You will have noticed, I'm sure, the difference between the sums provided to Glasgow and Edinburgh – the leader of Edinburgh council certainly did. Jane Meagher said she was grateful her city had received some money but disappointed that Glasgow "seems to be more highly valued, in a sense, than we are". "I do think it's a disappointing signifier of the esteem, or the importance, that Glasgow has over Edinburgh," she said. She also said it was "hard not to think that it might be political". Asked to explain what she meant, she said: "Look at where the support for the SNP lies."

Is she right? Ms Gilruth said the reason Glasgow was getting £10m and Edinburgh £5m was because the businesses in Glasgow were forced to close and the Edinburgh ones weren't, but what Ms Meagher is suggesting is that Glasgow is getting double because there's lots of support for the SNP in the city, and it's true to an extent. The party's vote share at the election was way down on 2021, but 41% of the people in Glasgow who voted still voted SNP. It's not the sugar high of 2014 when 53% in Glasgow voters said Yes, but the biggest party in the city is still the SNP.

However, proving a link between relatively high levels of support for the SNP in Glasgow and the city getting preferential treatment – a Glasgow bias, essentially – is trickier. Glasgow does get more government funding per head than Edinburgh does, but that's because the Scottish Government uses the GAE formula (Grant-Aided Expenditure) to calculate what councils get. Rural councils typically get a bit of an uplift because it costs more to provide services, and Glasgow gets a bit of an uplift too because of the levels of deprivation. The Barnett formula produces similar results for Scotland as a whole compared to England, so it shouldn't have anything to do with political bias at all.

And if we're going to ask whether the Scottish Government is treating Edinburgh council unfairly, a better question might be whether the government is treating any council fairly. Glasgow may look, on the face of it, like it's got £5m over on Edinburgh, but both councils, all councils, have suffered at the hands of the SNP. Local government's share of the government's revenue budget has declined considerably and the government has also exerted more control on council finances by increasing the proportion of ring-fenced national priorities councils are obliged to spend money on. So less money and less control.

And if you don't believe me, believe Susan Aitken. Ms Aitken has sometimes been accused of putting party before city and not criticising the SNP government

> "It has caused a lot of disruption, and part of the street is still closed

when it needs to be criticised, but to be fair to her, she has called for councils to be given more powers on the grounds that the whole point of local government is that councils get to do what suits them locally. She said local authorities "cannot be treated solely as a delivery vehicle for national priorities at the expense of local needs" – and I agree with her, she's right. Will the change ever happen though?

Possibly. Most of the parties had something about greater local powers in their manifestos, including the SNP who said they would "take steps towards the establishment of an Urban Development Company for Glasgow to act as a strategic driver of growth" (if I see them taking any of the steps, I'll let you know). But the change that's needed would require the SNP to commit to further devolution (or be forced to commit to it by Andy Burnham). It would also require the governance of the Glasgow city region to be fixed so it isn't fragmented across many administrative boundaries, and I've not seen many signs of any sort of the will to do that.

If it ever happened, the bonus would be that most of the money spent in council areas would be controlled by the councils who wouldn't then have to squabble so much over Holyrood handouts, as they've been doing with the fires. What it could never do, though, is deal with the suspicion of a Glasgow bias, or an Edinburgh one for that matter, because it goes deeper than £5m, or £10m. One of the reasons I was so excited the other day as I stood and watched Albert being lowered on to his plinth and George Square coming together again is that I love Glasgow, and I care about it, and it's my favourite city. In other words, I prefer it over Edinburgh. I have a Glasgow bias. And I'm not bothered.

'America,' says Diana Green, 'where men are men and fingers are optional'

Boozy badinage

"A WELL-KNOWN Scotch whisky firm is running a competition where those entering could win a 50 year old," reports reader Gordon McRae, who adds: "I have had to forego entry, as I suspect that at my age I could not keep up with a 50-year-old."

The name game

FAMILY-orientated David Guiles tells us that he hopes one day to have a child, who he plans on naming Harley... for a very good reason.

"It would mean," explains David, "that whenever anybody asked my son who he was, he'd reply, 'I'm Harley. David's son'."

Groovin' with golfers

THE Diary is listing songs to play in an indoor golf centre. David Donaldson says: "How about anything by The Eagles? Or 'Seein' Green', which was almost a song by the Muppets."

Brought to book

BIBLIOPHILE James Neil was perusing his Collins dictionary the other day when he stumbled upon an illuminating definition.

Next to the word "Trumpery" came the explanation: "Trumperies. 1 foolish talk or actions. 2 a useless or worthless article."

The Diary will make no further comment, for fear of instigating a second war between the USA and the UK. (And we all recall how the first one played out.)

Photo finish

THE Chinese inventor of the telephoto lens has just passed away, reports technology correspondent Steve Thomas, who adds: "RIP Zu Min."

The Diary is published twice a week on the Herald website – on Thursday and Saturday mornings. And on Saturdays in the print edition of The Herald. Do you have a tale to tell? Contact The Diary on 07375 137 824 or thediary@theherald.co.uk

'I find it almost impossible to argue,' says Lenny Michaels

How our campaign helped bring banks to account

SARAH-JAYNE DUNN

EVERY week in this column, we talk not just about the problems that we see in the Citizens Advice Bureau network, but about how public policy needs to change so these problems can be eliminated or at least reduced.

It's always pleasing to be able to report our campaigning has met with success.

Last October, I used this space to launch a campaign called Banking On The Basics, which used evidence from Scottish CABs to show the challenges faced by people who do not have bank accounts. It called for banks to make it easier for people to open Basic Bank Accounts, instead of hiding the option – as many of them do.

Not having a bank account is one of the worst forms of financial exclusion there is. It means you can't receive your wages or social security, you can't get a tenancy agreement, you can't get cheaper forms of insurance or apply for affordable credit products. You can't even get a mobile phone contract. Everyday bills become more expensive because you can't take advantage of cheaper deals offered to people who pay by direct debit.

You might be thinking: who doesn't have a bank account? Well, across the UK, 900,000 people, including 160,000 in Scotland. People who have been made bankrupt, ex-prisoners, refugees, homeless people and those who have suffered domestic abuse. In other words, people who are already vulnerable and likely to be struggling financially.

Research by Virgin Money has found that the average annual cost of not having a bank account is £598 per year. To inflict this additional cost on people who are already struggling is not just cruel – it also makes no economic sense because it makes it harder for them

> "Basic Bank Accounts are supposed to be available to everyone: a simple, no-frills type of account that anyone can open

to get back on their feet and become economically active.

Basic Bank Accounts are supposed to be available to everyone: a simple, no-frills type of account that anyone can open. With no credit or overdraft facility they offer no risk to banks. But the problem is they also don't make money for banks, and so they are practically hidden from view or made difficult to access. Often, people can't apply directly for them or are rejected due to poor credit scores or lack of approved identification. These were the problems we highlighted in our campaign.

So, what's the good news? The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) recently revealed it conducted a secret analysis, using evidence supplied by our campaign, to expose the extent of the problem. As a result, nine major UK banks have been compelled to improve their service in this area, pledging to make Basic Bank Accounts easier to open.

As ever, we must keep a close eye on the situation to make sure these commitments are made real, but the FCA has done a terrific job here and we commend it for following up our work.

It's a very good example of how the Citizens Advice network makes a difference. Not just by helping people in individual cases but by compiling evidence from those cases to identify systemic problems that affect people, and then campaigning to get those problems fixed.

Sarah Jayne Dunn is manager of the financial health team at Citizens Advice Scotland

The Herald

THE HERALD IS THE LONGEST-RUNNING NATIONAL NEWSPAPER IN THE WORLD AND REMAINS COMMITTED TO PROVIDING FAIR AND IMPARTIAL COVERAGE OF SCOTLAND'S AFFAIRS AND DOES NOT ENDORSE ANY POLITICAL PARTY

FOUNDED ON MONDAY
JANUARY 27, 1783

Time for a radical rethink on how we do prisons

LETTERS

The simplest way to reduce prison numbers (Letters, August 6) is to prevent admissions in the first place.

The UK has failed to develop comprehensive community-based services to prevent 'lower level' offenders being jailed. As it is, too many offenders in this category could be dealt with in this way, thus avoiding cluttering up severely overstretched prisons.

I should point out that this is not a soft option.

The UK jails more per head of the population than anywhere else in Europe, due to the lack of diversionary initiatives.

I write as a retired social worker who did a three and a half year 'stretch' in HMP Barlinnie (no remission or early release for me!) Over my years in criminal justice services, it was truly depressing to watch fledgling diversionary schemes fizzle out due to lack of money.

Lest readers think I am too liberal regarding prison reform, I do believe that releasing those who have committed serious crimes halfway through their sentence is wrong.

I also believe the beleaguered prison service in the UK needs more investment in recruitment and comprehensive training, and not in the further privatisation of prisons.

I should add that the hardline lock-em-up attitude, beloved by so many UK administrations down the years, has contributed to the current problem.

Time for a drastic rethink, I would suggest.

Ann Ross-McCall, Glasgow.

Police warning

When are our politicians in Scotland going to wake up to the reality that our national police service is an unmitigated disaster?

If you don't believe me, please read Calum Steele's depressing article ("We need to have a serious conversation about policing", The Herald, August 5).

I will not bore your readers with repeating my views on the sorry saga that is Police Scotland, other than to say A) I am heartily sorry for the front line officers who have somehow to make the national force (perhaps farce) work.

B) Prior to the introduction of Police Scotland, I concluded in a letter to The Herald criticising the proposal: "We are as a society sleepwalking into a situation that is not in our best interests."

Perhaps you will allow me a little self indulgence: "I did warn you".

Dan Edgar, Rothesay, Isle of Bute.

Don't free PC's killers

As a retired police officer I am appalled that the killers of PC Andrew Harper are being considered for release from prison after brutally killing him and showing absolutely no remorse ("Thames Valley force mulls legal bid to block release of policeman's killers", The Herald, August 6).

It is beyond me why the government, with all the expertise it has at hand, cannot prevent the release of PC Harper's killers.

It seems to me that it should be comparatively simple to ensure that any person guilty of wilfully killing emergency services personnel in the execution of their duty should not be released until they have served their full term.

Such killings are abhorrent and thankfully relatively few in number.

Not releasing these killers would have little impact on the government's legitimate need to reduce the prison population until more prison spaces are available.

This tragedy has pricked the conscience of the nation, and my heart goes out to PC Harper's wife, family and friends.

Iain AJ McKie, Ayr.

Tax rate's just part of debate

The recent debate about the impact of Scotland's 48p top rate of income tax has once again reignited the tired argument that the country's tax regime is making it a less attractive place to live and work ("Is it time for all Scots to pay a little more tax?", The Herald, August 7).

Far from driving workers away, as some commentators claim, UK Government data obtained by the Scottish Government through a Freedom of Information request shows that more taxpayers – including higher earners – are choosing to move north of the Border.

This is boosting Scotland's tax base and undermining claims that its tax policies are deterring people from living and working here.

It's also worth remembering that income tax is only one part of the picture. Scottish households, for example, pay less council tax on average than those in England. Scottish students benefit from free university tuition, while students south of the Border can face fees of more than £9,000 a year. Prescriptions are also free in Scotland, compared with charges of more than £9 per item in England.

Nor should we forget that well-funded public services are an important part of what makes somewhere an attractive place to live, work and raise a family.

Most Scottish taxpayers pay less income tax than their counterparts in England, while those with the broadest shoulders are asked to contribute more.

The debate about tax should therefore be based on the overall cost and quality of living in Scotland, rather than focusing on one tax rate in isolation.

Alex Orr, Edinburgh.

Are we getting 'hole' truth?

I'm no economist, but I find it hard to square the size of BP's profits, and those announced recently by Shell, with the size of 'holes' that both the UK and Scottish Governments find in their budgets ("BP profits soar as boss says North Sea 'not competitive'", The Herald, August 5).

Combined, these companys' annual profits may well exceed £40billion.

About a month ago, it was reported that Sir Keir Starmer left Andy Burnham with a £5billion hole in the defence budget.

There's something wrong here, and I simply don't get it.

Willie Towers, Alford, Aberdeenshire.

First amongst equals?

I see Angela Constance reckons John Swinney is the best SNP First Minister we've had ("Sturgeon's attacks on SNP's election campaign are wrong, says minister", The Herald, August 5).

I disagree, though there's not exactly a lot of competition.

Michael Watson, Rutherglen.

Greek tragedy

Never has a film been so overhyped as the blockbuster The Odyssey, to the extent that it falls flat even when it is watched on an IMAX screen ("Christopher Nolan's latest blockbuster puts north-east Scotland on the map", The Herald, July 21).

After I watched it, you could tell from the mutters of the audience, as they were leaving the cinema, that they had found the film disappointing. And I am being polite in using that description.

This production was intended to portray the story of Odysseus

Join the debate: Letters should not exceed 500 words and must include a full address (not for publication) and contact number, including a subject line. Email letters@theherald.co.uk, or post to Letters, The Herald, 125 Fullarton Drive, Glasgow East Investment Park, Glasgow G32 8FG. We reserve the right to edit submissions.

Remember when... Dorothy Tutin portrayed Cleopatra in Edinburgh

DREW ALLAN
Selections from
The Herald Picture Store

IN August 1977 theatre fans streamed into Edinburgh's Assembly Hall to see a superb production of Antony and Cleopatra. Alec McCowen played Antony. "Dorothy Tutin's Cleopatra", the Herald's theatre critic Christopher Small noted, "is what, perhaps, we expect from her, in riggishness, in raillery, in seductive teasing and dangerous temper, but also something more, a wanton got up in every available pearl and jewel like any gypsy, but also an Egyptian queen..."

Browse the Herald Picture Store at picturestore.heraldandtimes.co.uk. Email photoenquiries@heraldandtimes.co.uk

Billy Connolly knows a joke or two, but does he know his chips?

From our archives

5 years ago

A U.N. report will issue "the starkest warning yet" on the state of the climate crisis – piling pressure on the UK Government to pull its weight ahead of hosting the COP26 conference in Glasgow. The report from the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is the first part of a review of current scientific knowledge about how the world is warming due to human activity. It is the first such global assessment since 2013.

10 years ago

SCOTLAND'S rarest amphibian, the natterjack toad, has increased in one of its most important breeding sites. Natterjacks have been in steep decline in Scotland since the 1970s. Just two years ago there were only around 200 breeding adults left, concentrated in a few sites on the Solway coast. Individuals are told apart by a unique yellow "racing stripe" that runs down the centre of their backs, and the pattern of warts around it.

25 years ago

AFTER 141 days of peaceful protest, the Govanhill swimming pool campaign erupted in violence last night as hundreds of protesters clashed with police outside the building at the centre of the dispute. Several people, including at least one child, were injured in ugly scenes when the police moved their cordon from the front of the swimming pool as mounted officers arrived. Some protesters were seen to fall under horses as others ran to safety.

Scots word of the week

TICKET

BEING called a ticket is not a compliment. This term is defined in the Dictionaries of the Scots Language as "a person dressed in a slovenly, tawdry, disheveled or incongruous manner ... a sartorial oddity". DSL's earliest citation comes from Neil Munro's Daft Days (1907): "I cannot go to speak to anybody, for I'm such a ticket". We then find the following in Isabel Cameron's Fascinating Hat (1940): "'I'm a regular ticket', she thought, 'I must change my dress.'".

We see the same concern for appearances in this example from the Huntly Express in March 1970: "Ye widna like tae see yer father gyan hame a ticket like fat I am". DSL also records several spoken examples from the 1990s, ranging from an observation from an Angus correspondent, "you look a right ticket", to an instance of brotherly love from Edinburgh, "Ma wee brother is always dressed like a ticket".

The term is still with us, as this March 2017 example from the Herald shows: "Shaping a daughter is a big responsibility. You're their first female role model and it doesn't matter what age you are; you always seek your mother's approval. Even when they are no longer alive, you hear their voice in your head telling you, "You look a right ticket!". The word has always had a Scottish connection, as its widespread use in 16th century Scots predates its use in English. Unfortunately, it's currently unclear why this particular 20th century meaning has developed

DSL Online: https://dsl.ac.uk

Picture of the Day

These are the Falls of Avich between Loch Avich and Loch Awe near Dalavich village built by the Forestry Commission, photographed by Joseph Waclawski

We welcome submissions for Picture of the Day. Email picoftheday@theherald.co.uk

Is it time for a rethink if we want to decrease pressure on the prison service?

and his wife Penelope, according to the epic poem from which the tale derives.

I could not see any advantage lent to the film by the IMAX technology, for it was over noisy and made much of the dialogue difficult to contend with. I am sure that some people enjoyed the special effects, as many do in crash, bang, wallop movies of the modern era.

However, all of that left me cold.

Considering that the film was based on an epic poem which has stood the test of time, we could have expected a more poetic feel to the narrative, which involves a long separation between a husband and wife, who are desperate to get back together, after circumstances have kept them apart for 20 years.

The essence of the plot was changed as a result of omissions, additions and alterations, all of which detracted from the romance of the story.

And what the audience was fed at the conclusion of the movie seemed to amount to an anti-Trump line of rhetoric, which should not have been allowed to contaminate Homer's exquisite example of poetry.

If I were to point out the 'exclusions from', 'inclusions in', and 'changes to' the story, I would need an entire page to detail them all.

If blood, guts and gore are to your liking, emphasised by an over loud soundtrack, then this film just might be your cup of tea.

The finished presentation – fabricated to appeal to a modern audience largely unacquainted with the Homeric oeuvre – made me conclude it was like handing over material to have a suit made by a tailor. Then the tailor decides to just suit himself, regardless of the warp and woof of the actual material before his eyes.

This film was ill conceived and anachronistic – let the buyer of tickets beware.

Denis Bruce, Bishopbriggs.

Gallus Glasgow Games

How I applauded our friend and Herald correspondent Mark Covell from Leeds (Letters, August 4). 'Glasgow has effectively saved the Commonwealth Games', ran The Herald's supporting headline.

My native city, and its tremendous achievement, was celebrated in glowing terms in Mr Covell's letter. There was such a buzz from the opening and closing ceremonies. Athletes, stage-performers and staff alike were wonderful.

And the colour, style and energy of the Amdavad 2030 welcome performance was something else, truly. A 2014 closing ceremony official brought the house down with his gallus Glasgow refrain: Pure Dead Brilliant. Glasgow 2026 was so worthy, too.

We really rose to the challenge – and how! Thank you, Mr Covell.

Brian D Henderson, Glasgow.

Historic highlanders

Congratulations to Coigach Heritage and all its supporters for bringing to public attention the 19th century Highland women who were successful in fending off the efforts of sheriff officers and police to evict them from their land, and for the creation of such a magnificent memorial ("Remembering the remarkable women of Coigach", The Herald, July 25).

Scotland should be a place where everyone knows their names, as they played an early part in the attempts to secure changes in the nature of land tenure. Their historic protests reminds one of another lady of protests, Mary Barbour, who successfully led rent strikes in Glasgow in 1915.

Ian W Thomson, Lenzie.

Eerie eclipse

With the upcoming partial solar eclipse on August 12, I recall what happened during the total solar eclipse on August 11, 1999, the last total eclipse of the millennium.

We were warned not to go outside to look at it, as it would damage our eyes unless we had special glasses. So mum and I watched on TV, at home in Rutherglen.

It was a very eerie experience. Suddenly the darkness came, and then the temperature plummeted, and it became very cold. There was complete silence... even the birds stopped singing. After it was over I went outside, into the garden. I just wanted to feel connected to the earth. I decided to put my arms around a silver birch tree that my late father had planted in 1983.

Trees are always warm; they have a life force and feel as if they are hugging you back. This time was very different. The tree was cold. All very strange. Nature still baffles us all, doesn't she? Or maybe the scientists have an answer to this?

Dorothy Connor, Rutherglen.

Food for thought

I don't often disagree with Sir Billy Connolly, though I can't accept his opinion that the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum has the best chips in town. (The Herald, August 7). I prefer chips from a greasy spoon cafeteria, every time.

Alex Platter, Milngavie.

On this day

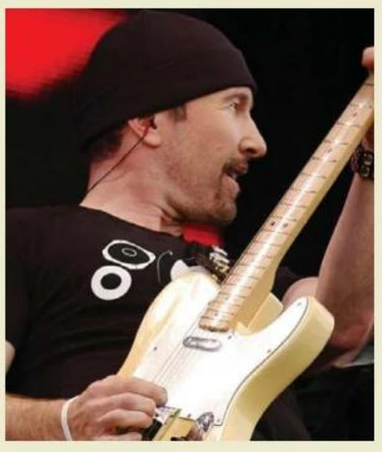
117: Hadrian became Emperor of Rome.
1834: The Poor Law Amendment Act was passed, abandoning the system of outdoor relief by which parishes looked after their poor and replacing it with the workhouse.
1876: Frank Richards, author and creator of the fat schoolboy Billy Bunter, was born in London as Charles Hamilton.
1900: The Davis Cup for tennis was contested for the first time at Brookline, Massachusetts, and won by USA.
1940: The Battle of Britain began.
1958: Columbia Records signed up a 17-year-old singer called Cliff Richard.
1963: The Great Train Robbery took place at Sears Crossing, Buckinghamshire, when a gang of 15 men, including Ronnie Biggs and Buster Edwards, stole more than £2.6 million.
1974: Richard Nixon announced his resignation as US president, the first to do so, because of his implication in the Watergate scandal.
1991: Hostage John McCarthy came home, five years and three months after being kidnapped and held hostage in Beirut.
2008: The opening ceremony of the Olympics took place in Beijing at the 'Bird's Nest' Stadium.

Birthdays

Dustin Hoffman (left), actor, 89; Connie Stevens, actress and singer, 88; Keith Carradine, actor, 77; Nigel Mansell, former racing driver, 73; The Edge (David Evans, right), rock guitarist (U2), 65; Angus Fraser, former cricketer, 61; Chris Eubank, former boxer, 60; Princess Beatrice of York, 38.

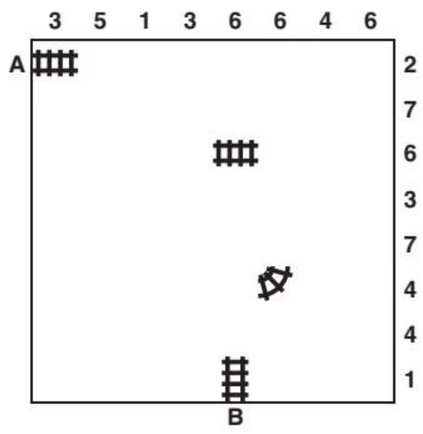
Quote of the day

"Yeah, it was a lie. I'd finished the record pretty much. So I was just lying to your face basically. I knew when I said yes to Reading and Leeds it was going to be about this next album" – **Charli XCX** tells Radio 1's Jack Saunders that she'd misled him in a previous interview when she said she hadn't started making any new music.

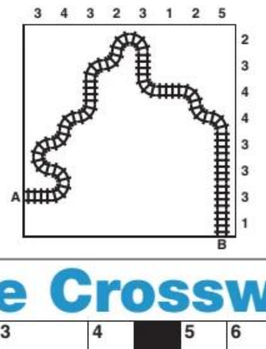


TRAIN TRACKS

Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from town A to town B. The numbers indicate how many sections of rail go in each row and column. There are only straight rails and curved rails. The track cannot cross itself.



Yesterday's Solution:



TOTALIZE

Just follow the instructions from left to right, starting with the number given to reach an answer at the end.

EASY 52	- 17	÷ 5	× 11	+ 256	÷ 3	- 33	Half of it	- 29	× 6	ANSWER
HARDER 709	+ 3245	5/6 of it	- 2289	50% of it	+ 3172	÷ 15	- 56	÷ 7	+ 2329	ANSWER

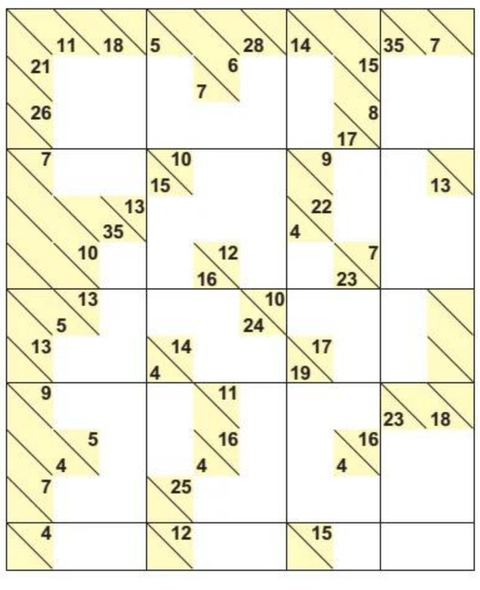
Yesterday's Solutions: 84, 3837

KAKURO

Fill in the white squares with the numbers 1 to 9. Each horizontal block of squares must add up to the number in the shaded square to its left, and each vertical block must add up to the number in the shaded square above it. No number may be used more than once in any one block.

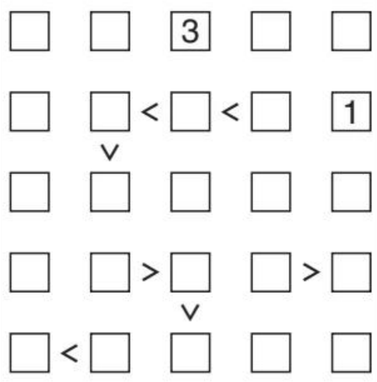
Today's Solution:

■	9	8	1	■	6	3	■	1	3	
5	6	9	3	8	2	1	■	6	1	
7	■	9	■	7	■	1	4	■	■	
■	■	8	2	1	■	5	3	■	1	
■	9	8	■	9	5	■	9	6	4	
■	3	1	6	■	3	7	4	2	■	
2	5	■	2	3	■	6	2	8	■	
■	1	8	■	2	8	■	1	6	9	
1	7	■	9	4	7	1	4	3	2	
6	9	■	5	1	■	9	6	4	8	



FUTOSHIKI

Fill the squares so that each row and column contains 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. The symbols tell you if the number in the square is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.



Today's Solution:

5	2	1	4 >	3
3 <	4	2 <	5	1
2	3	5	1	4
1	5 >	4 >	3	2
4	1	3	2	5

SUDOKU

Fill in the grids so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There's no maths involved – solve the puzzle using reasoning and logic.

EASY

9								3
	2		6	5	4		9	
			9	2	3			
	5	9	7		6	1	2	
	7	8		3		4	5	
	1	6	5		2	7	3	
			2	9	1			
	3		4	6	5		8	
6								4

HARD

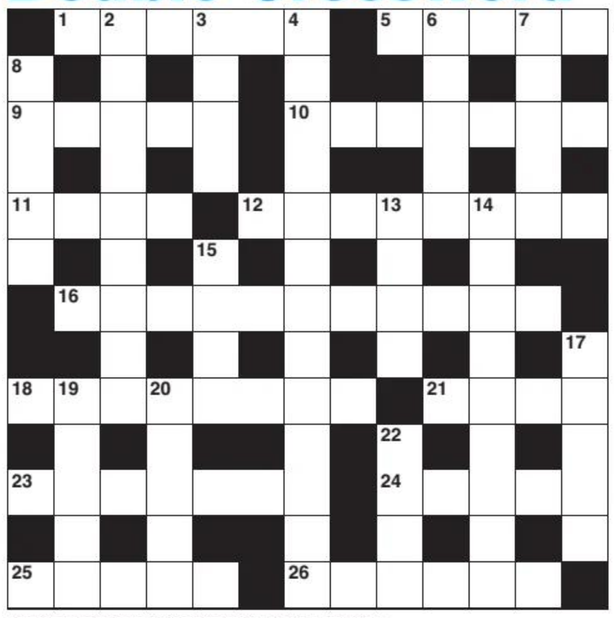
9	6			2			1	5
8		5				3		7
		1	5		9	6		
5								9
6			9		8			3
		8		3		7		
	1				4			
2				9				1
4			6		1			8

Yesterday's Solutions:

4	1	6	8	5	7	3	9	2
7	9	5	3	6	2	8	4	1
3	8	2	4	9	1	5	6	7
9	3	7	5	4	8	2	1	6
2	5	8	1	7	6	4	3	9
1	6	4	9	2	3	7	5	8
6	2	1	7	3	4	9	8	5
8	4	9	2	1	5	6	7	3
5	7	3	6	8	9	1	2	4

6	3	1	5	9	8	7	2	4
2	7	5	4	1	3	9	6	8
4	9	8	2	6	7	5	3	1
3	8	7	9	4	1	2	5	6
9	5	6	7	8	2	4	1	3
1	4	2	6	3	5	8	9	7
5	6	3	8	2	4	1	7	9
7	1	4	3	5	9	6	8	2
8	2	9	1	7	6	3	4	5

Double Crossword



YESTERDAY'S CRYPTIC SOLUTION:

ACROSS: 1 Lapsed, 4 Drapes, 9 Rites, 10 Elitism, 11 Ailment, 12 Oaths, 13 Haberdasher, 18 Adieu, 20 Fathoms, 22 Emulate, 23 Slime, 24 Geezer, 25 Team up. DOWN: 1 Larvae, 2 Patella, 3 Ensue, 5 Ruinous, 6 Point, 7 Samosa, 8 Beg to differ, 14 Educate, 15 Egotism, 16 Bad egg, 17 Asleep, 19 Inure, 21 Taste.

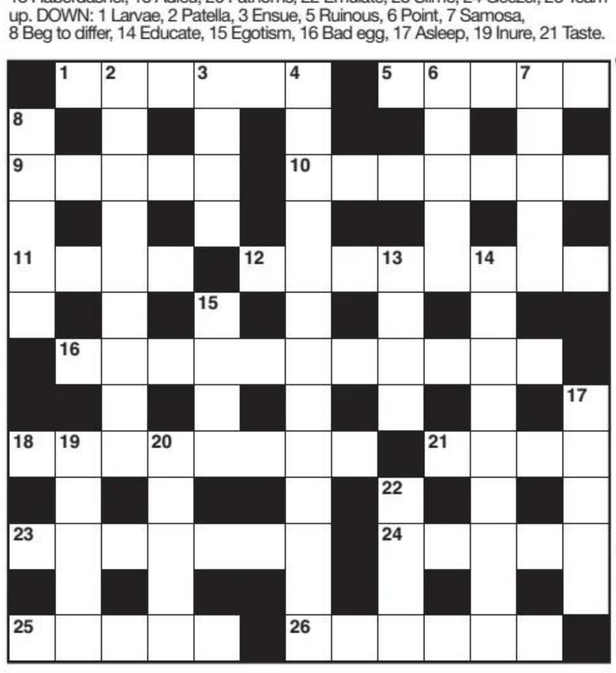
CRYPTIC CLUES

ACROSS

1 How to march on foot? (2,4)
5 Small piece of land is rented out (5)
9 Watch back for assigned task (5)
10 This work is decreasing (7)
11 Cook portion of quiche faultlessly (4)
12 Restrained by winding canal within sea (8)
16 Perfume? It goes down the pan! (6,5)
18 Urgent record? (8)
21 Embargo includes eastern vegetable (4)
23 Six valid works for composer (7)
24 Entire cavity pronounced (5)
25 Flipper's call to those in charge (5)
26 Wanderers finding damson in distress? (6)

DOWN

2 Me at the top of the charts? (6,3)
3 Disapproving noise at posh ballet skirt (4)
4 Took notice if pointed at a tin again (4,9)
6 Producing sound by breaking up coins (5)
7 Wise Premium Bond selector (5)
8 Peaceful time back inside the curtain (5)
13 A container slightly open (4)
14 Peer from Belgian city, feudal superior (5,4)
15 Harlem is regularly giving donations (4)
17 Sounds like boy has to prepare to pray (5)
19 Reportedly man's salary increase (5)
20 Bear to get up (5)
22 Went by sea on big mouth's return (4)



QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

1 Set upon, attack (6)
5 Topic (5)
9 Fire residue (5)
10 Belly, stomach (7)
11 Cry of an owl (4)
12 Closely guarded (secret) (4-4)
16 Quality of not being influenced by personal feelings (11)
18 Pause before speaking (8)
21 Small bloodsucking fly (4)
23 Narrow-minded (7)
24 Fruit of the oak tree (5)
25 Agent for an absent person (5)
26 Agreement between countries (6)

DOWN

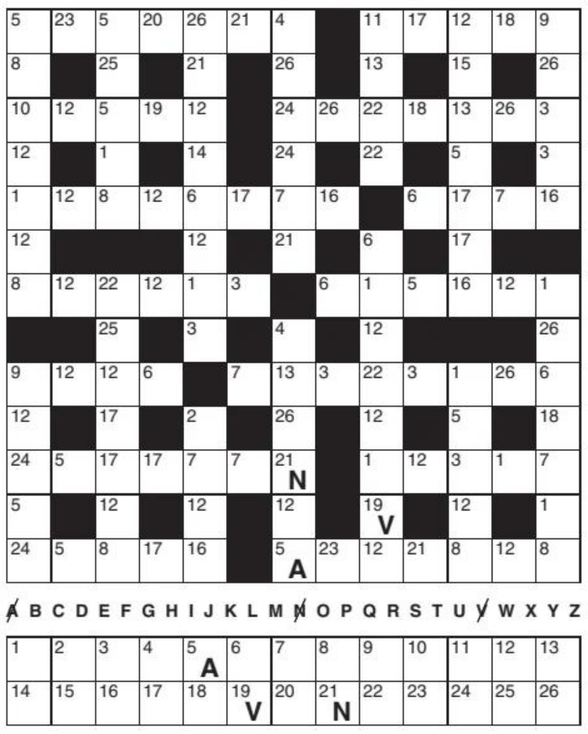
2 Vehicle for pupils (6,3)
3 In addition (4)
4 Refrain from further comment (5,2,2,4)
6 Bird associated with babies (5)
7 Consume all of (3,2)
8 Racing boat (5)
13 Additional tax (4)
14 Dining in a restaurant (6,3)
15 Nipple on a cow's udder (4)
17 Fixed amount of time (5)
19 Oversight, blunder (5)
20 List of contents in a book (5)
22 Cook in the oven (4)

YESTERDAY'S QUICK SOLUTION:

ACROSS: 1 Unplug, 4 Raffia, 9 Lucid, 10 Academy, 11 Scourer, 12 Rodeo, 13 Rock climber, 18 Uncle, 20 Prophet, 22 Scalpel, 23 Debut, 24 Tirade, 25 Mystic. DOWN: 1 Unless, 2 Piccolo, 3 Udder, 5 Anagram, 6 Field, 7 Anyhow, 8 Jam roly-poly, 14 Knee-pad, 15 Exhibit, 16 Sunset, 17 Static, 19 Chair, 21 Oddly.

Codeword

Codeword is a crossword with no clues. The number on each square corresponds to a letter. Fill in all the instances of the given letters, and then use your skill to crack the code and work out the rest. Cross each letter of the alphabet off as you go.



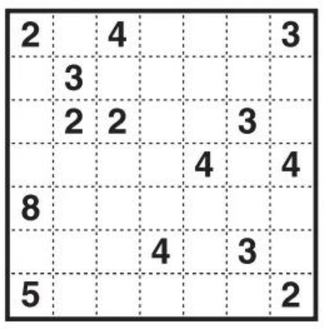
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5 A	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19 V	20	21 N	22	23	24	25	26

Yesterday's Solution:

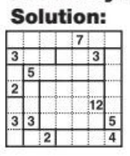
P	L	J	F	D	X	M	E	O	Y	R	A	Q
U	W	G	S	V	H	T	I	B	N	C	K	Z

Cell Blocks



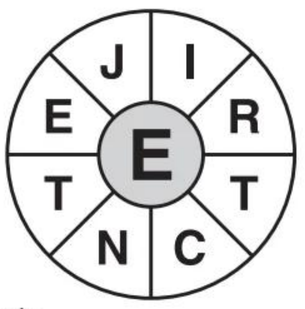
Divide the grid into blocks that are either square or rectangular. Each block must frame a single number, and each block must contain the same amount of cells as the number it frames.

Yesterday's Solution:



Word Wheel

Give yourself ten minutes to find as many words as possible using the letters in the wheel. Each word must use the hub letter and at least three others, and letters may be used only once. You cannot use plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. There is at least one nine-letter word to be found.



How you rate:
15, average
20, good
28, very good
33 or more, excellent.

Yesterday's Solution:

Deer, deign, denier, dine, diner, dinner, dire, dirge, drier, edge, eider, ending, engine, engined, erne, erred, erring, gender, gene, genie, genre, girder, greed, green, grinder, grinned, grinner, inner, need, needing, nerd, nine, reed, reign, reigned, rein, reined, rend, render, rending, ride, rider, ridge, ringed, ringer, RENDERING.

8 AUGUST 2026

GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

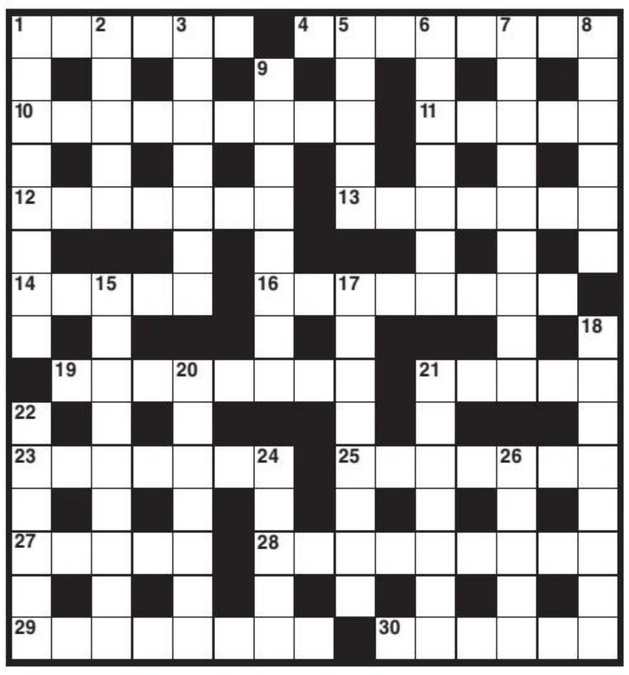
crossword no. 1138

ACROSS

1 Surname of music hall comedian Harry (6)
4 Pepper-producing plant (8)
10 Open-topped pie (9)
11 Irish town which gave its name to an ancient book of Latin Gospels (5)
12 First name shared by actress Portman and singer Imbruglia (7)
13 City which hosted the 1996 Summer Olympics (7)
14 The Devil himself! (5)
16 Sprinkled with breadcrumbs or cheese (2,6)
19 Strong, low-density, highly corrosion-resistant, white metallic element (8)
21 Epithet applied to the Russian rulers Ivan, Peter and Catherine (5)
23 One of the Leeward Islands (7)
25 City of northern Italy (7)
27 Town between Stirling and Dunfermline (5)
28 One of the six original counties of Northern Ireland (9)
29 Lamb as an emblem of Christ (5,3)
30 ___ *Galore*, novel by Compton Mackenzie (6)

DOWN

1 Waters reputed to contain a monster (4,4)
2 German WWII submarine (1-4)
3 Fifth Greek letter (7)
5 Amazon brand intelligent personal assistant (5)
6 Outer Hebrides nature reserve (2,5)
7 Plant of the poppy family (9)
8 Sweet white wine (6)
9 Famous racing car named after five Italian brothers (8)
15 Sporting event in which competitors have to run, cycle and swim (9)
17 Pheasant, for example (4,4)
18 Surname of the author of *Eminent Victorians* (8)
20 Very thin, long-legged hounds (7)
21 Biblical giant (7)
22 Canal or hat (6)
24 1966 Michael Caine film remade in 2004 with Jude Law (5)
26 Wimbledon's playing surface (5)



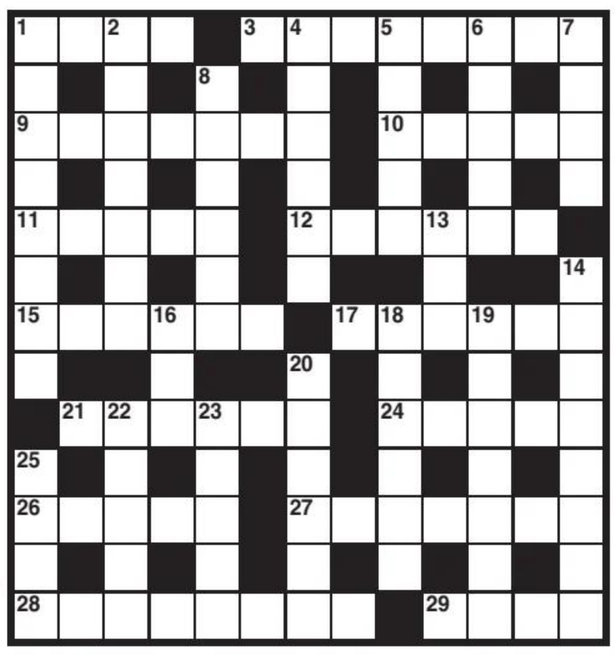
Solution to General Knowledge Crossword No. 1137

ACROSS: 1 Calais, 4 Warfarin, 10 Lily Allen, 11 Sikhs, 12 Bacchus, 13 Santana, 14 Scone, 16 Amritsar, 19 Odysseus, 21 Welsh, 23 Tintern, 25 Silicon, 27 Tonga, 28 Violinist, 29 Sheridan, 30 Amiens. **DOWN:** 1 Calabash, 2 Lilac, 3 Ivanhoe, 5 Agnes, 6 Fastnet, 7 Rik Mayall, 8 Nissan, 9 Glissade, 15 Ordinance, 17 Resistor, 18 Rhinitis, 20 Stefani, 21 William, 22 States, 24 Nivea, 26 Caine.

THE WEE STINKER

ACROSS

1 Turn off & out up with (4)
3 Rest from the barre (8)
9 Ointment stored in Attic amphora (7)
10 Ben is playwright (5)
11 Kind person & kind of red (5)
12 Essays for hero - no Unionist (6)
15 Struggle to control lusts with pill (6)
17 Wattle (6)
21 Natty bouncer (6)
24 One responding to caller's ... (5)
26 ... blower? (5)
27 Payment for article in coppers (7)
28 Cutting square shirt? (8)
29 Split payment (4)



DOWN

1 Malign (8)
2 Ashes on home farm (7)
4 Find (6)
5 Lag that's quick (5)
6 The SA expedition (5)
7 Call on blower (4)
8 Coin (6)
13 Swell marine (3)
14 Window one hanged (8)
16 Energy juice (3)
18 Managing top of wall (6)
19 Pepper (7)
20 Call casually for 7 ends (4,2)
22 Fruit - rasps - pulled regularly (5)
23 Make dry (5)
25 Hints about double (4)

LAST WEEK'S WEE STINKER

ACROSS: 1 Bull, 3 In a china, 8 Shop, 9 Tropical, 11 Rye, 12 Shower, 16 Clever, 17 Office, 19 Stumer, 20 Rum, 23 Marigold, 25 Scan, 26 Marinade, 27 Uses.
DOWN: 1 Bass rock, 2 Loosened, 4 Narrow, 5 Cup, 6 Inch, 7 Ally, 10 Aspect, 13 Effort, 14 Pibrochs, 15 Terminus, 18 Smiled, 21 Imam, 22 Brer, 24 Gin.

Pioneer of independent music scene and football fan who set up the Bairns Trust

Brian Guthrie
Born: March 4, 1956;
Died: July 5, 2026

SCOTLAND'S music network has a small army of people who work without acclaim or publicity, managing groups, promoting local concerts and running modest-sized record labels. Brian Guthrie, who has died aged 70, was one of those.

For decades Guthrie, a highly familiar figure around Grangemouth and Falkirk, assiduously performed all of these tasks and more, to the point where he was widely seen as one of the pioneers of Scotland's independent music scene.

In his time he had also written for London-based music magazines, and played music on radio programmes. "I had a lot of careers running simultaneously", he told Grant McPhee, author of the music book Postcards From Scotland, two years ago. It was not an understatement.

Guthrie's younger brother Robin was one of the co-founders of the hugely popular trio, Cocteau Twins, who released their debut album in 1982. When Ivo-Watts Russell, the man behind the independent London label 4AD, rang the Guthrie family home to offer the group a single deal, having been impressed by a cassette tape of demo recordings, it was Brian who answered. Watts-Russell asked if Robin happened to be available. No, Brian replied: "He's actually following one of your bands around the country, sleeping in people's doorways".

Friends who attended Brian's funeral service were welcome to wear football tops – Guthrie was a lifelong supporter of Falkirk FC – or band T-shirts. Many were happy to oblige and among the groups whose logos were on view were the Sex Pistols, The Ramones, Nirvana and Simple Minds. The entrance music at the service was The Faith Healer, by the Sensational Alex Harvey Band and The Stranglers' No More Heroes.

Guthrie was also a former chairman of the Central Scotland Regional Equality Council and contributed at national level through equalities organisations.

Brian Guthrie was born in Edinburgh on March 4, 1956 and he was four years old when his family moved to Grangemouth. Robin was born in 1962. Brian was 22 when his father died. He remained living with his mother, with whom he maintained a close and effective partnership for many years. He never married and never had children of his own. Had he been asked, the service heard, he would probably have preferred it to be recorded that he was "popular with the ladies".

After school, he was drawn towards journalism. Writing came naturally to him. He worked at local newspapers and music publications, reviewing concerts, including an outdoor music festival at Grangemouth Stadium in September 1972, and writing articles, while producing poetry and song lyrics of his own.

He took to running a punk and post-punk club, The Nash, at Grangemouth's International Hotel. Among the earliest shows he co-staged at Grangemouth Town Hall, in late 1978, was one featuring Ultravox and pre-fame Simple Minds, and another by Squeeze and Simple Minds.

He also staged concerts in Falkirk and Bo'ness town halls and in Edinburgh, Paisley and Dunfermline. In the post-punk era, he told Grant McPhee: "I was doing tours with people like Echo And The Bunnymen and The Sound, and still doing punk bands at the smaller end, like Chelsea, UK Subs, The Members. I moved into the ska scene and did quite a few ska things, most notably on a regular basis with Bad Manners."

Brian Guthrie was a lifelong supporter of Falkirk FC and was always ready to scrutinise the club accounts at annual general meetings

This was the period when he wrote for magazines such as Sounds, Melody Maker and Kerrang! He also worked for Radio Scotland and broadcast a weekly, three- or four-hour long alternative rock show for the Forth Valley station, Central FM, for six months.

Through his company, Nightshift Management, he managed a group, Dead Neighbours, and released their music on his label, Sharko Records. From that group sprang another, Lowlife, which featured Will Heggie, one of the original co-founders of the Cocteau Twins. Lowlife were highly regarded and Guthrie released their records on his Nightshift label. Much later came yet another label, Twenty Stone Blatt, whose bands included The Primevals and, of now, The Media Wh***s.

Speaking at the service, the latter band's manager, Ally Gemmell, said: "The trouble for Brian is that he positioned himself in the punk, garage, indie and underground scene as opposed to the commercial and radio-friendly scene and never turned a profit. This was a frustration for Brian as he often felt overlooked by the industry".

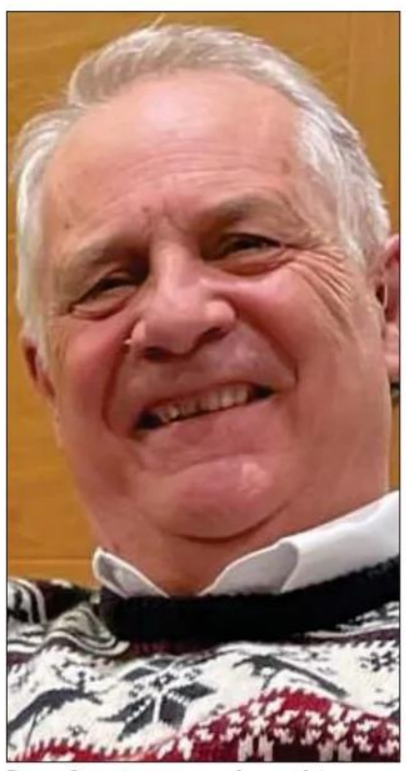
When it came to his beloved Falkirk FC, he helped establish Bairns Trust, the forerunner of the Falkirk Supporters' Society and was a regular presence on the supporters' bus from Grangemouth.

A tribute posted by the club said he led several campaigns after detecting injustices. He fronted a fans' campaign to remove one particular family from the board, going so far as to hire a bus to stage a protect outside their butcher's shop in Lauder. It was fair to say, the tribute added, that he ruffled more than a few feathers in his time and was always ready to scrutinise the club accounts at annual general meetings.

The Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 prompted him to launch a fans' campaign to support those who had been affected by it. His later years were marred by serious illnesses, which restricted the number of times he could see his club in action, but he was able to enjoy their long-overdue return to Scottish football's top flight.

RUSSELL LEADBETTER

History teacher who helped pioneer Modern Studies and was 'definition of Labour values'


Dave Armstrong was brought up in the Royal Botanic Garden

Dave Armstrong
Born: September 28, 1952;
Died: June 1, 2026

DAVE ARMSTRONG, who has died aged 73, had the happy knack of successfully combining a rich fulfilling family life with participating enthusiastically in a range of activities in others' interests, making many wonder how he managed it. His energy, commitment and ability to give of his best was remarkable.

An excellent history teacher and head of department at West Calder High, West Lothian, he wrote textbooks for the Scottish Qualifications Authority syllabus and was a long-serving representative of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) teaching union. A lifelong Labour Party member involved in many campaigns, he held various positions, including chairman of the Edinburgh East constituency party. Labour MP Ian Murray described him as "a lovely person and Labour through and through" while fellow Labour MP Chris Murray said Dave was "a truly lovely man and the absolute definition of Labour values".

Dave also served in Edinburgh as a community councillor, was secretary of the Drummond Trinity Cricket Club and a volunteer driver for the Duddingston Lunch Club. A sports fan, he was a very good rugby player and passionate Hibs supporter and season ticket holder for many years.

First and foremost, however, he was a devoted family man.

David Graham Armstrong was born in Edinburgh to parents Betty and Sam, younger brother of sister Rosi. He was brought up in the Royal Botanic Garden, where his father was a gardener and the family lived on site. From an early age, he met a wide range of people and enjoyed a happy childhood, with nature abundant on his doorstep. Initially, he attended Trinity Primary School before going to Trinity Academy, where he immersed himself in school life. He contributed articles to the magazine, took part in amateur dramatics, sang in the choir and played in the 1st XV as hooker for two seasons, earning his colours.

Academically bright, he studied history at Edinburgh University and after graduating obtained his teacher training qualification in Dundee. Two significant developments took place while at university: he began his involvement with Labour and met future wife Diane. He met her at a student party where, despite an inauspicious start involving spilled drink, they got on well and began a relationship, marrying in 1977 in Glenrothes, Fife. She was a primary teacher, later a deputy head. They had 47 happy years together during which they had daughters Ruth and Claire.

Dave's first teaching post took him to Dumfries Academy in 1976 where, typically, he embraced a range of activities in and out of the classroom, participating in school shows and helping train sports teams. Fellow teacher and friend Tom Pow said: "The qualities that made Dave a great teacher – openness, commitment and knowledge – were the ones that also made him such an engaging conversationalist. His interest in what had always interested him, other lives, he never lost."

In 1980 he returned to Edinburgh as history teacher at Boroughmuir High and pioneered the development of Modern Studies. Eight years later, he moved to West Calder High, where he became head of the History department. At both schools, he undertook many activities. He regularly led parties of pupils to First World War battlefields in France and Belgium and trips to the Benmore Outdoor Centre, Dunoon, underlining his belief in the importance of an all-round education and teamwork. Dave also coached football and rugby teams, began his EIS representative duties and set SQA examination questions and marked papers. He also became president of the Scottish Association Of History Teachers, helping to change the curriculum to reflect a more international aspect. After early retirement in 2009 he acted as chief invigilator at West Calder for SQA exams.

While teaching, he was active politically, campaigning for Labour at elections, going to doors, leafleting and doing a myriad of unseen tasks. He was also prominent supporting the teachers' strike, refusing to cross the picket line despite financial hardship, taking part in the Jobs For People marches, poll tax protests and supporting the miners' strike. From 2014 to 2021, he was chairman of his constituency party whose generosity, patience and good humour was highly valued.

Diane died suddenly in August 2024, an enormous blow to Dave and family, exacerbated by his stage four cancer diagnosis six weeks later.

He is survived by his daughters, sister and granddaughters Eilidh, Holly, Hannah and Lucy.

JACK DAVIDSON

At The Herald, we carry obituaries of notable people from the worlds of business, politics, arts and sport but sometimes we miss people who have led extraordinary lives. That's where you come in. If you know someone who deserves an obituary, please consider telling us about their lives. Contact garry.scott@heraldandtimes.co.uk

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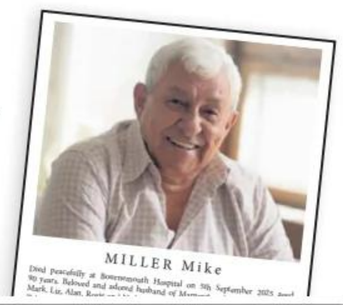
MILLER Mike
Died Peacefully at Bournemouth Hospital on 5th September 2025. Aged 90 years. Beloved and adored husband of Margaret. Mark, Liz, Alan, Rosie and [illegible]

DEATHS Notices

SMITH - Michael Hugh

Peacefully, on Saturday 1st August 2026, at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, aged 79 years. Michael, son of the late Hugh Smith and May Winkfield, and a much-loved husband to Elizabeth; father to the late Andrew and Alistair, and to Heather; and brother to Brett. He will be greatly missed. Funeral service at The Hurlet Crematorium on Monday 24th August at 3pm, and thereafter at The Orchard Park Hotel, Giffnock.

SCRIPTURE Text

Give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
1Thessalonians 5v18 (NIV)

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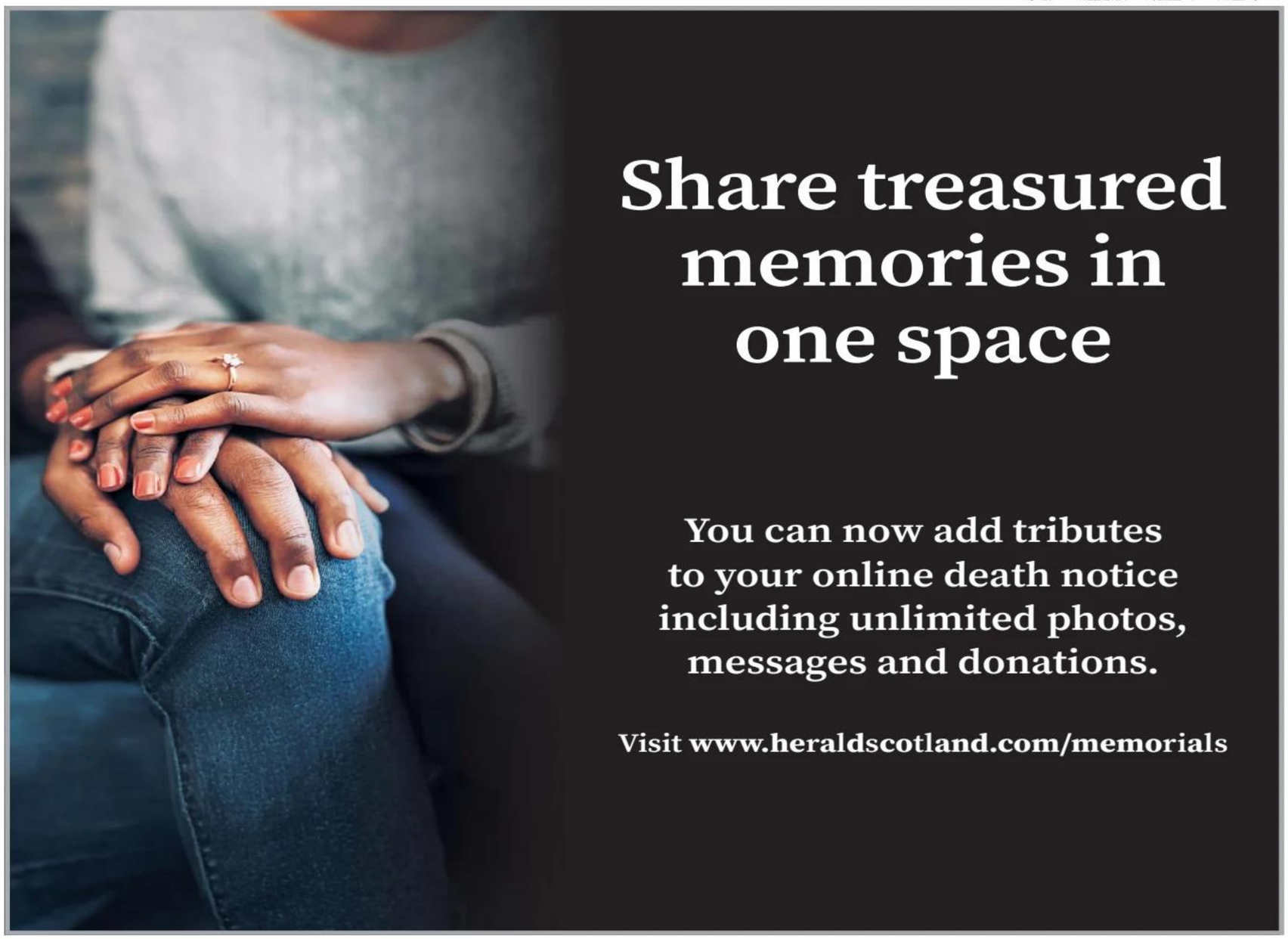
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Stocks rise and pound up after surprise US jobs fall

STOCKS ended a winning week on the front foot yesterday, while the pound pushed higher against the dollar after weak US jobs figures.

The FTSE 100 Index closed up 33.20 points, 0.3%, at 10,901.09.

The FTSE 250 ended up 159.44 points, 0.7%, at 24,854.86, another record close, while the Aim All-Share closed up 8.76 points, 1.1%, at 795.89.

For the week, the FTSE 100 was up 0.3%, the FTSE 250 was up 3.7%, and the AIM All-Share was up 4.0%.

The advance in the pound came as the US labour market unexpectedly shed 23,000 jobs in July, missing the FXStreet-cited consensus for an increase of 80,000.

The Bureau of Labour Statistics also sharply revised lower previous months' data, cutting June payroll growth to 20,000 from 57,000 and May's reading to 63,000 from 129,000.

Combined, employment in May and June was revised down by 103,000 jobs.

Despite the weaker payrolls figures, the unemployment rate unexpectedly edged down to 4.1% in July from 4.2% in June, while annual wage growth slowed to 3.2% from 3.4%, below expectations for a 3.5% increase.

Thomas Feltmate, senior economist at TD Economics, said the report was "soft", but "perhaps not as dire as suggested by the headline payrolls print".

Global drinks giant Diageo extended Thursday's gains, climbing 3.3%

It will, though, help to "quiet the noise of a September rate hike".

"The focus now shifts to next week's CPI report, where we expect a milder print to provide further reassurance that the effects of the supply shocks are fading, reinforcing our view that the Fed is likely to remain on hold," Mr Feltmate added.

The data saw interest rate hike bets across the pond pared back.

The CME FedWatch tool now places a 58% chance that interest rates will be left unchanged at the September Federal Open Market Committee meeting, compared with 45% on Thursday.

Ahead of that meeting, there will be two inflation readings, another jobs report and the Federal Reserve's Jackson Hole Symposium.

The pound traded at $1.3498 yesterday afternoon, up from $1.3454 dollars at the equities close on Thursday.

The euro stood higher at $1.1560 against $1.1524.

Against the yen, the dollar was lower at 157.68 yen, compared with 158.41 yen.

Against the euro, sterling was little changed at €1.1677 from €1.1675.

The yield on the US 10-year Treasury trimmed to 4.65% on Friday from 4.66% on Thursday.

The yield on the US 30-year Treasury was flat at 5.20%.

In European equities yesterday, the Cac 40 in Paris closed up 0.2%, while the Dax 40 in Frankfurt ended 0.7% higher.

Stocks in New York were higher.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 0.2%, the S&P 500 index was 0.7% higher, and the Nasdaq Composite was up 1.3%.

Airbnb soared 15% after it raised guidance for the second quarter in a row after better-than-expected earnings.

In its second quarter, the San Francisco-based holiday rental platform said it "exceeded our outlook across every key metric".

Chief executive Brian Chesky said that "more new guests are trying Airbnb than we've seen in years", pointing out that growth among first-time bookers accelerated to 11%, the highest growth rate "we have seen in four years".

Back in London, Fresnillo rose 4.6% as the gold price's recent rally continued.

The yellow metal traded higher at $4,349.35 an ounce yesterday from $4,250.01 on Thursday.

The price rise supported Endeavour Mining, up 4.1%, and Hochschild Mining, up 6.2%.

Global drinks giant Diageo extended Thursday's gains, climbing 3.3%, on further reflection of its annual results and a new strategic plan from chief executive Dave Lewis.

JPMorgan analyst Celine Pannuti was impressed, saying: "We found Dave Lewis's down to Earth, decisive and transparent approach inspiring, and should no doubt elevate the performance culture."

Nonetheless, she sees "limited room for a re-rating for now until we see signs of improved top line trajectory".

Citigroup's Simon Hales called it an "honest assessment of the spirits market and the state of its business".

Although there is "no quick fix to return the US business back to growth, Diageo has diagnosed the problems and is sensibly taking actions to remedy what it can control", he added.

On the FTSE 250, Goodwin stormed 9.8% higher as it confirmed it has launched a strategic review, including considering the potential sale of a substantial part of its Mechanical Engineering division.

Recruiters Hays and Michael Page were in demand, up 5.8% and 3.8% respectively, continuing their rebound on hopes for a revival in the jobs market.

Hays's share price has now more than doubled from a low of below 30p seen in April.

But Oxford BioMedica plunged 15% as it lowered revenue expectations for 2026, due to client programme deferrals, delayed timelines, changes to a large client's procurement strategy and a later-than-expected operational ramp-up at its Durham, North Carolina site.

The cell and gene therapy manufacturer cut its full-year revenue forecast by 17% to between £180 million and £200m, from its original prediction of between £220m and £240m.

Brent oil for October delivery traded higher at $83.40 a barrel yesterday afternoon, from $81.74 late on Thursday.

The biggest risers on the FTSE 100 were Fresnillo, up 126p at 2,864p, Endeavour Mining, up 158p at 4,046p, Diageo, up 57.5p at 1,790p, St James's Place, up 29.5p at 1,147p, and Convatec, up 5.6p at 232.4p.

Meanwhile, the biggest fallers on the FTSE 100 were Burberry Group, down 30.5p at 1,164.5p, Glencore, down 9p at 557p, Coca-Cola Europacific Partners, down 115p at 7,950p, Computacenter, down 56p at 4,828p and Shell, down 37.5p at 3,277.5p.

Monday's global economic calendar sees the start of the two-day Reserve Bank of Australia meeting, and trade figures in Japan.

CLOSING PRICES

Company	Price	Var	Year High	Year Low
3i Group	2867	-4	4459	2082
3i Infrastructure	384 ½		393 ½	326
4imprint	4924	-76	5000	3055
Aberdeen Group	252 ⅝	+1	261	182
Aberforth Smlr Cos*	1732	+24	1756	1418
Abrdn Diversified	12 ¼		48 ⅞	12 ¼
Admiral Gp	3886	-14	3926	2644
Airtel Africa	329 ⅜	-2 ⅝	420 ¼	212
AJ Bell	610 ½	+11	643	414 ⅜
Alfa Financial	166 ¼	+1 ¼	248 ½	142 ⅜
Alliance Witan	1384	+1	1386	1188
Allianz Tech	708	-4	758	445 ½
Anglo American	4022	+46	4225	2123
Antofagasta	3981	+7	4455	2037
AO World	98 ⅝	+1 ¼	113 ¼	83 ⅜
Ashmore Gp	224 ⅝	+5	266 ¾	153 ½
Ashoka India	257	+½	285 ½	217
ASOS	394 ½	+7	394 ¾	206 ½
Aston Martin	35 ¼	+1 ⅛	86	34 ⅛
AstraZeneca*	11896	+46	15542	10956
Auction Tech	451	-5 ¾	483 ¾	263
Autotrader Group	521	+9 ¼	826 ¾	427 ¼
B&M	235	+⅝	264 ⅛	155 ¼
Babcock Intl Grp	1186 ½	-3 ½	1502	921
BAE Systems	2220	+20	2331	1609 ½
Baillie Gif Japan	1078	-2	1084	834
Baillie Gifford US	322 ½	+10	366 ½	261 ½
Balfour Beatty	881	+2 ½	899	553
Baltic Classifieds	205	+7 ½	355 ½	170 ¾
Bankers InvTst*	152 ¼	-⅜	152 ¾	122 ¼
Barclays*	516	-4	530 ⅜	357 ¾
Barr (AG)	607	-3	710	598
Barratt Redrow	323 ⅝	+3 ¾	409 ⅜	241 ¼
Beazley	1290 ½	-½	1296	769
Bellway	2124	+26	2868	1715
Berkeley Gp Hldgs	3626	+34	4434	3104
BH Macro	419 ½	-1 ½	462 ½	389
BH Macro (USD)	4 ¼	-	4 ⅝	4
Big Yellow Gp	900	-7	1180	812
Biopharma Credit	74 ¼	+1 ¼	74 ¼	66 ⅞
BlackRock Greater Eur IT	614	+3	624	516
BlackRock Smaller Co*	283	+3 ½	354 ½	66 ⅛
BlackRock Wld Mining	982	+30	1046	555
Bloomsbury*	650	+6	672	438 ½
Bodycote	914 ½	+½	923	601
BP	517 ¼	-2 ½	606 ¼	410 ½
Breedon	353 ¼	+7 ⅝	377	273
Bridgepoint Group	342	+4 ⅝	348 ¾	222 ⅝
British Land	443 ¼	+1 ⅜	449 ¼	321 ¼
Brunner Inv Tr*	1564	+8	1572	1354
BT Gp*	199 ¼	-¾	239 ½	2
Bunzl	2870	+38	2870	1989
Burberry Gp	1164 ½	-30 ½	1360	1004 ½
Bytes Tech	417 ¾	-2 ¼	427 ¼	253 ⅝
Caledonia Inv*	386	-2	391 ½	312
Centrica	154 ¼	+½	218 ¾	151 ½
Chemring Gp	627	+2 ½	631	460
City of London IT*	597	+4	597	488
Clarkson	4840	-150	5155	3395
CMC Markets*	690	-3	749	206
Coats Group	86 ½	+1	95 ⅛	71 ¾
Coca-Cola	4960	+44	5170	3306
Computacenter	4828	-56	4884	2242
Convatec	232 ⅜	+5 ⅝	256 ⅜	194
CPP Group	20		154 ½	13
Cranswick*	5270	+60	5690	4840
Crest Nicholson	65 ⅜	+1 ⅝	180 ¾	61 ¼
Croda International	3265	-16	3322	2439
Currys	162	+1 ⅛	168 ¼	106 ⅞
CVS Group	1300	+3	1424	1114
DCC Energy	6375		6385	4350
Deliveroo	179 ¾		179 ¾	176 ¾
Derwent London	2100	+46	2146	1509
Diageo	1790	+57 ½	2121	1362 ½
Dignity*	549		549	549
Diploma	7700	+20	7707 ½	5015
discoverIE Gp	833	+1	836	514
Dominos Pizza	205 ⅜	-¼	220	167 ¼
Dr. Martens	83 ⅝	+1 ⅜	99 ⅜	60 ¾
Drax Gp	718	-½	918	626 ½
Dunelm Gp	895	+7	1241	715
Ecora Royalties	157 ¾	+8	158 ⅛	70 ½
Edin Inv Trust	861	+5	861	760
Edin Wwide	247 ½	+7 ½	290 ½	188
Endeavour Mining	4046	+158	5290	2436
Energean	732	+7	1026	683 ½
EnQuest	22 ⅞	+¼	27 ¾	9 ¾
Entain	545	+8	936 ⅜	521
Essentra	114	+¾	114	79 ⅞
Euro Sml Co.*	239 ½	+½	246 ½	197
Experian	2897	+67	3982	2375
F&C Investment	343 ⅜		351 ¾	82 ¼
Fidelity China SPE	267 ½	+3 ½	332 ½	245
Fidelity Emg	1432	+2	1562	836
Fidelity Eur	443	+2	443	372
Fidelity Spec Val	475	+5	475 ¼	372
Finsbury G&I Tst	826	+11	915	713
Foresight Env	86 ⅝	+⅛	88 ¼	61 ⅞
Foresight Group	503	+7 ½	503	345
Foresight Solar*	71 ¼	+1	88	60
Frasers Group	808 ½	-6 ½	827 ½	618 ½
Fresnillo	2864	+126	4448	1378
Games Workshop*	18880	-60	21940	14200
Gamma Comms	988	+20	1106	701
GCP Infra Inv*	81 ¾	-⅛	83 ¾	70
Genuit Group	313 ⅝	+11 ¼	389 ½	243 ¼
Genus	2304	+2	3170	1966
Glencore	557	-9	615	284 ¼
Global Smaller*	195 ¾		197 ¾	163 ⅝
Globaldata	86 ¾	+2 ¾	151 ½	63 ⅝
Goodwin	20650	+1850	27600	9100
Grafton Grp Units	1042 ¾	+13 ¼	1044	808 ⅜
Grainger	176 ¼	+2 ¼	206	150 ⅜
Greencoat UK	114	-1	118 ¼	92 ¼
Greencore Gp	263 ⅜	+2 ¾	306 ½	192
Greggs	1918	-7	2032	1418
GSK	1960 ½	+24	2268	1404
Haleon	369 ⅜	-1 ¼	410 ⅞	320 ⅞
Halfords	246	+2	246	127 ⅝
Halma*	3796	-6	4878	3210
Hammerson	374 ⅜	-1 ⅜	385 ⅝	267 ¾
Harbour Energy	245 ⅜	+1 ¾	318 ¾	185 ⅞
Harbourvest Glb	3450	+20	3460	2730
Harworth	181	+3	181 ½	120
Hays	66	+3 ⅝	66 ½	29 ⅝
Helios Towers*	202 ⅝	+4 ¾	245 ⅜	120 ¾
Herald Inv Trust	3035		3260	2305
HG Capital Trust	396	+5	522	323
HICL Infr	139	+¼	139 ⅜	109
Hikma Pharma	1677	-22	1851	1191
Hill & Smith	3095	+5	3105	1968
Hilton Food Gp	613	+1	849	456
Hiscox	1829	+18	1899	1273
Hochschild Mining	509 ½	+29 ½	808 ½	272 ⅝
Hollywood Bowl	285 ½	-5 ½	307 ½	234 ½
Howden Joinery Gp	840	+6	970	723 ½
HSBC Hldgs	1529 ¼	+8	1597 ⅜	938 ⅞
Hunting	443	-4	531	297
ICG	2042	+14	2332	1463
ICG Enterprise Trust	1478	+10	1600	1310
IMI	3136	+6	3136	2226
Imperial Brands	2791	+32	3341	2668
Inchcape*	837 ½	+11	890	640 ½
Informa*	904 ⅜	-¾	993 ⅜	739 ¾
Integrafin Holdings	383 ½		392	298 ½
Intercontl Htls	158	-¾	10585	128 ⅜
Intertek Gp	5840		5840	3582
Intl Cons Airl	442 ⅜	-3 ⅝	488	342 ¼
Intl Public Prtnshps	143 ⅜	-⅝	144 ⅝	117 ¼
Intl Workplace Gp	189 ⅝	+3 ¾	249 ⅜	168 ¾
Invensys	509 ½		509 ½	509 ½
Invesco Asia Dragon	492 ½	-½	516	372
Investec	673 ½	+1 ½	683 ¾	518
IP Group	70 ⅜	+1	70 ⅝	48 ⅝
Ithaca Energy	231 ¼	-1 ¼	285 ⅝	153 ¾
ITV	73	-¼	85 ¼	67 ⅜
JD Sports Fashion	95	+1 ½	104 ½	65 ¼
Johnson Matt	2168	+16	2388	1765
Johnson Service Gp	148 ⅜	-1 ⅜	170 ⅛	125 ⅝
JP Morgan Glbl Gth	638 ½	+2 ½	638 ¾	535
JP Morgan Japan IT	837	+1	839	659
JPM American*	1250	+6	1250	1056
JPM Asia*	570	-6	650	395
JPM Emerging Markets*	163 ⅜		180 ¼	119 ¼
JPM Euro Disc.	634	+1	663	557
JPMorgan EMEA	240	-10 ½	301	196
JTC	1335	+1	1366	897
Jupiter Fund Mngt*	161 ⅝	-⅝	195 ¼	115 ⅝
Kainos Gp	933 ½	+29	1190	683
Keller Group	3076	-4	3444	1282
Kenmare Resources	210	+10	337	180 ¾
Kier Gp	250 ⅝	+2 ¼	252 ½	180 ¾
Kingfisher	327 ⅝	+2 ½	370 ½	243 ¼
Lancashire Hldgs*	597 ½	+4	694	565
Land Securities	714 ½	+1 ½	722	529
Law Debenture	1276	+10	1276	982
Legal & General	316 ⅜	+4 ⅜	317	233 ⅝
Lion Finance	12440	+270	12580	7020
Lloyds Banking Gp*	115 ⅛	+½	117 ⅛	78 ½
London Stock Exch	8920	+170	9992	7170
LondonMetric Prop	195	-½	215	177 ½
M&G	363	-1 ⅛	365 ⅛	248 ⅝
Man Group*	311 ¾	-¼	316	154 ¾
Marks & Spencer	408 ¾	+2 ¼	410 ⅝	308 ⅞
Marston's	52 ¼	+¼	68 ⅞	36 ⅛
ME Group	122 ¼	+2	215 ½	100 ¼
Melrose Ind	485 ⅜	+8 ¼	681 ¾	448 ¼
Mercantile IT	288	+3	288	237
Merchants Tst*	685	+5	685	537
Metlen Energy & Metals	50	-⅛	56 ¼	31 ¾
Metro Bank	173 ¾	+¼	179 ⅝	100
Michael Page	194 ¼	+7 ⅛	268	103 ⅛
Mitchells & Butlers	282 ½	-½	301	228
Molten Ventures	646	+6	651 ¾	349 ¾
Monks Inv Tst*	1620	+6	1656	1374
Mony Group*	201 ⅜	+⅜	213	144 ½
Moonpig	285 ⅜	+¼	286	192 ⅝
Morgan Advanced	254	+9	254 ¼	187 ⅜
Morgan Sindall Gp	4494	+26	5530	4050
Mothercare	1	+¼	3 ⅜	⅝
National Grid	1200	+4	1400	1010 ½
NatWest Group	712 ⅜	+⅝	722 ¾	505 ¼
NCC Grp	142	-¾	157 ¾	113 ¾
Neuberger Private Eqty Partners*	1476	-22	1632	813 ½
Next	15685	-30	15715	11575
Next Energy Solar	50 ¾	+½	77 ⅞	44
Ninety One*	223 ¼	+1	259 ⅜	185 ½
Nth Atlantic Smlr	427	+4	431	330
Oakley Capital Inv	528	-2	576	169
Ocado Gp	214 ¾	+4	373 ⅜	159 ¼
Old Mutual	60 ⅝	+2	77 ¾	52 ¼
OSB Group	520 ½	+13 ½	643 ½	484 ¼
Oxford Biomedica	505	-86	913	430
Oxford Instruments*	2888	-10	3302	1766
Oxford Nanopore	124 ⅞	+6 ½	219	104 ½
Pacific Horizon	1086	-4	1252	658
Pantheon Infra	111 ¾	-⅜	119 ⅜	101
Pantheon Intl	400	+1	407 ½	323 ½
Paragon	827	-3	926 ½	711 ½
Partners Group	624	-10	942	593
Patria Private	608	+8	642	536
Paypoint	600 ½	-2	822	438 ½
Pearson	1224	-5	1326	891 ⅝
Pennon Gp*	469 ¾	+5 ⅜	600	446
Pershing Square	3912	+8	5090	3642
Persimmon	1166 ½	+11	1543 ½	998 ⅝
Personal Assets Tr	555	+3	555	509
Pets at Home Gp	211 ¾	-1	236 ⅝	170 ⅞
Playtech	367 ⅜	+4	436 ½	232
Plus500	3756	-70	5070	2942
Polar Cap Tech	664	-5	733 ½	388 ½
Polar Capital Gl	250 ½	-1 ½	253	203
Pollen Street	842	-3	964	702
PPHE Hotel Gp	1526		2060	1286
Premier Oil	245 ⅜	+1 ¾	318 ¾	185 ⅞
Primary Hlth Prop*	95 ⅞	+¼	108 ¼	87 ½
Prudential	1044 ½	+17 ½	1220	916
QinetiQ*	553 ½	+6 ½	553 ½	406
Quilter	200	+4	208 ¼	154 ⅜
Rank Gp	102 ¾	+2 ⅜	149 ⅝	88 ⅛
Raspberry Pi	697	+3	1051	257 ¼
Rathbone Grp	1720	+16	2265	1582
Reckitt Benckiser*	5306	+58	6681 ¾	4443
RELX*	2627	+24	3625	2013
Renewables Infra	78 ⅛	+1 ⅛	80 ⅞	63 ½
Renishaw	5235	+70	5455	2940
Rentokil Initial	360 ⅛	-3 ⅜	506 ¾	344 ¾
RHI Magnesita	3115	+65	3345	1980
Rightmove	473	+3 ⅛	787 ¼	404
Rio Tinto	7528	+71	8308	4448 ½
RIT Cap Partners	2630	+15	2630	1942
Rolls-Royce*	1530	-3 ⅜	1570 ⅜	1026
Rotork	487	-¾	488	288 ⅜
RS Group	743 ½	-3	746 ½	541 ½
Ruffer Investment	299	+½	313 ½	283 ½
SABMiller	4498 ¼		4498 ¼	4498 ¼
Safestore Hldgs*	626 ½	-2	837	582
Sainsbury(J)	353 ⅛	-1 ¼	359 ⅜	199 ⅛
Savills	976		1108	808
Schroder Asia	819	-7	888	600
Schroder Oriental*	447 ½	-1 ½	459	302 ½
Schroders*	584	-½	589 ½	361 ¼
Scot American Inv	570	+5	570	487
Scottish Mortgage	1396 ½	+32	1545	1028 ½
SDCL Efficiency	38 ⅞	+¼	63	32
Segro*	959 ⅝	-2 ⅜	997 ⅜	604 ⅜
Senior	292		311	164 ⅝
Sequoia Econ Infra*	86 ¾	+¼	87 ½	75 ¾
Seraphim Space	188 ¼	+6 ¼	273 ½	66 ¾
Serco	265 ¾	+5 ¾	324 ¾	216 ⅜
Severn Trent	3142	+26	3280	327
Shaftesbury	145	+⅛	157 ⅛	126 ¼
Shell	3277 ½	-37 ½	3583	2562
SIG	8 ¾	+¼	12	7 ½
Sirius Real Estate	99 ⅛	-2 ⅝	111 ⅞	91
Smith & Neph	1113	+15	1435	1073 ½
Smiths Gp	2698	+21	2746	2118
Soco Intnal	33 ½	+2	33 ⅝	19
Softcat	1994	+2	2003	1091
Spirax Group	7500	+125	7960	6060
Spire Health	234	-1	249	142 ¾
Spirent Comms	198 ¾		198 ¾	194
SSE*	2390	+14	2757 ½	1612
SSP Group	214 ¼	+2	214 ¼	138 ⅝
St James Place*	1147	+29 ½	1553	1053 ½
Standard Chartered*	2219	+24	2248	1305 ½
Standard Life	941 ½	+7 ½	957 ¾	619
Sthree	285 ½	+14	287 ¼	137 ⅜
Supermarket Inc.*	87	+⅝	88 ⅞	76 ¾
Syncona	108 ⅝		109 ¾	86 ⅞
Target Healthcare	112 ¾	-1	116	92 ¾
Tate & Lyle	553	-1	569	329 ⅜
Taylor Wimpey	84 ½	+½	116 ½	74 ⅛
TBC Bank Group	4936	+46	5180	3640
TELECOM PLUS*	857	-8	1892	710
Temple Bar	429	+3	429	335
Templeton Emerg	312	-½	350	197 ¾
Tesco	475 ⅛	-⅝	501 ¾	411 ½
The Sage Group	1048 ½	+21	1175	783 ⅝
TP ICAP	324 ¾	+7	355	240 ½
TR Property IT	316	-1	361 ½	295
Trainline	253 ¾	+7 ¾	300	185 ½
Travis Perkins	675	+12	714	507 ½
Tritax Big Box	166 ¼	+1 ¾	173 ¼	133 ¼
Trustpilot	298 ¼	+6 ⅝	299 ¼	129 ¼
Twentyfour	108 ⅜	+⅜	114 ¾	104 ⅝
Unbound	¾		¾	¾
Unite Group	532 ½	-2	739	448 ¾
United Utilities	1436	+8	1457	914 ¾
Vesuvius	405 ⅜	+13 ⅜	503	355
Victrex	822	+6	822	539
Vietnam Enterprise	716	+2	848	684
VinaCapital Vietna	430		499	414 ½
Vistry Group	283 ⅝	+¾	736 ¾	224 ⅜
Vodafone Gp	120 ½	+1 ¼	123 ¼	84 ⅛
Volution	693	+8	712	562
W.A.G	100 ½		106	82
Watches of Switz	752 ½	+10 ½	801 ½	318 ¾
Weir Gp	2722	+26	3546	2274
Wetherspoon (JD)	814	+4	817	555 ½
WH Smith	452 ⅜	+9 ⅝	1355 ½	383 ¼
Whitbread	2517	-11	3274	2234
Wickes Group	202		255	170 ¾
Wizz Air Holdings	1095	-15	1447	849 ½
Wood Gp(J)	29 ⅜		29 ⅜	18 ¼
WPP	411 ⅜	+16 ⅜	413 ⅛	224 ⅞
XPS Pensions	344	+4	381 ½	283
Zigup	467	+3 ½	471 ½	301 ½

* Ex Dividend

COMMENT AT HERALDSCOTLAND.COM

Tequila has now become so popular that US actor and wrestler Dwayne Johnson has launched his own tequila in the UK

Don't worry about every twist, be diversified to sip back and relax

Tom Watts

THE town of Santiago de Tequila enjoyed a relatively unremarkable first few decades of existence, serving as little more than a small outpost of the Spanish Empire and home to a close community of Franciscan friars.

That was until 1600, however, when Pedro Sanchez de Tagle, the Second Marquis of Altamira, noticed that the local flora surrounding the town, especially the fermented leaves of the native Agave plant, were ideal for his mass-producing a new beverage. The new thirst-quencher was a big hit, not just as a drink but also as a medicine, with its many health benefits supposedly enhanced by applying it directly to injuries and ailments, making the marquis a very wealthy man.

Nowadays, tequila is an even bigger business, with 583 million litres consumed globally during 2025 alone. Although 85% of this volume was in Mexico and America, the liquor has been gaining in popularity on these shores at a rapid pace. Consumer data released during the last quarter showed Tequila has overtaken gin for the first time as Britain's preferred summer spirit. Driven by celebrity-backed brands and a new consumer penchant for the Spicy Margarita, containing tequila, lime and triple sec, the drink is now giving the traditional gin and tonic a serious run for its money in bars across the UK.

While many patrons up and down the land may be with a margarita or paloma in hand, particularly during the recent heatwave, a raft of positive geopolitical and corporate earnings news showed financial markets have also been sippin' pretty.

Indeed, the second quarter reinforced the notion that markets continue to navigate an increasingly complex geopolitical landscape with remarkable resilience, delivering their strongest run of performance since 2020.

With all this tequila talk in mind, it was not always clear who was calling the shots during negotiations between Washington and Tehran. Nevertheless, signs of diplomatic progress eased concerns over disruption to tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. Oil markets responded favourably, with crude prices falling around 38% over the quarter to finish near $73 per barrel. Adding to the downward pressure, Middle Eastern producers signalled an intention to increase output, while a slowing global economy tempered expectations for demand growth.

However, towards the end of the period, tensions again began to simmer. US President Donald Trump appeared to pretty much give up on securing a deal. "For me, I think it's over" were the words that helped define market movements during July, as the US President declared the interim agreement reached with Iran was no more.

On the news, oil prices moved above $100 per barrel briefly before settling as cooler heads prevailed. Ironically, the word "tequila" is often translated as "the place where it is cut" – an increasingly unlikely prospect for those hoping for interest rate reductions from the Federal Reserve or the Bank of England.

Higher oil prices throughout the quarter not only pushed back expectations for monetary easing but also prompted investors to question whether the next move from central banks could, in fact, be higher rather than lower.

The message from the Federal Reserve's new chairman, Kevin Warsh, was certainly enough to leave expectations of imminent rate cuts on the rocks. Mr Warsh reiterated the central bank's commitment to returning inflation to its 2% target and warned that investors expecting near-term monetary easing could ultimately be left disappointed. Policymakers on Threadneedle Street followed suit by keeping borrowing costs unchanged.

Private sector wage growth is now running at its slowest pace since the Covid-19 pandemic, providing some reassurance that domestic inflationary pressures are beginning to ease.

Whilst policymakers in America and the UK elected to stand firm, their counterparts in Europe and Japan took a different route. With inflation having accelerated across several economies following earlier increases in energy prices, both central banks opted to raise interest rates by 0.25%. The European Central Bank made its move during June and the Bank of Japan followed shortly afterwards, lifting borrowing costs to their highest level in over three decades in an attempt to contain rising living costs.

For investors, the last quarter was another reminder that markets often prove far more resilient than headlines would suggest. Financial markets have demonstrated a remarkable ability to take events with a pinch of salt rather than reach for the bottle.

It has certainly been a quarter during which markets have remained in high spirits, but maintaining a disciplined, diversified and long-term investment approach remains one of the most reliable ways to navigate uncertainty.

After all, successful investing is rarely about reacting to every twist and turn of the headlines; it's about having a portfolio robust enough to weather them.

Tom Watts is MPS portfolio manager at Julius Baer

The Herald

In association with Moneyfactscompare.co.uk

SAVERS

Contact	Account	Notice or Term	Deposit	% AER	Interest Paid
SAVINGS ACCOUNTS WITH INTRODUCTORY BONUS					
LemFi via app	LemFi Instant Access	None	£1	5.00% A	Mly
Tembo Money via app	HomeSaver	None	£10	4.55% A	Mly
SAGA saga.co.uk	Easy Access Savings	None	£1	4.50% A	Mly
Chase via app	Chase Saver Boosted	None	£1	4.50% A	Mly
Post Office Money® postoffice.co.uk	Online Saver 89	None	£1	4.31% A	Yly
SAVINGS ACCOUNTS WITHOUT INTRODUCTORY BONUS					
cahoot cahoot.com	Sunny Day Saver (6)	None	£1	5.00%	Yly
cahoot cahoot.com	Simple Saver (18)	None	£1	4.52%	Yly
GB Bank gbbank.co.uk	Notice 1	150 Day	£1,000	4.38%	Yly
BLME B blme.com	Notice (10)	90 Day	£10,000	4.37%	Qly
StreamBank streambank.co.uk	Notice - 12	90 Day	£1,000	4.35%	Mly

ISAs & CREDIT CARDS

CASH ISAs (Transfers in ?)

Contact	Account	Notice or Term	Deposit	% AER	Interest Paid
Sidekick (Yes) via app	Cash ISA	None	£1	4.66% A	Mly
Chip (No) via app	Chip Smart ISA	None	£1	4.41% A	Mly
Plum (No) via app	Plum ISA	None	£1	4.40% A	Mly
Monument Bank (Yes) via app	Easy Access ISA	None	£10,000	4.34% A	Mly
JUNIOR CASH ISAs (Transfers in ?)					
Leek Building Society (Yes) via branch	Junior ISA	Age 18	£1	3.85%	Yly
Beverley BS (Yes) via branch	Junior ISA	Age 18	£1	3.85%	Yly
Skipton BS (Yes) via branch	Junior ISA (14)	Age 18	£1	3.80%	Yly
The Stafford BS (Yes) via branch	Junior ISA 2	Age 18	£1,000	3.76%	Yly

A = Introductory rate for a limited period. B = Provider operates under Islamic finance principles, rate shown is expected profit rate. OM = Interest paid on maturity.
All rates are shown as AER variable unless otherwise stated. Methods of opening and operating accounts will vary.

CREDIT CARD INTRO OFFERS

Contact	Card type	INTRODUCTORY - PURCHASE Mthly	PA	Until	STANDARD RATE Mthly	APR	Interest free days	Min Inc
TSB 0345 835 3846	Pur Purchase MC	0.00%	0.00%	1st 26 mths	1.880%	24.9%	56 days	-
Halifax 0345 944 4555	0%Pur&BT CCV	0.00%	0.00%	1st 25 mths	1.873%	24.9%	56 days	£14K
Lloyds Bank 0345 602 1997	Pur 0%Pur&BT CCV	0.00%	0.00%	1st 25 mths	1.873%	24.9%	56 days	£14K

CREDIT CARD STANDARD RATES

Contact	Card type	INTRODUCTORY - PURCHASE Mthly	PA	Until	STANDARD RATE Mthly	APR	Interest free days	Min Inc
NatWest 0345 788 8444	The NatWest CC MC	-	-	-	1.016%	12.9%	56 days	£10K
Bank of Scotland 0345 964 5645	Credit Card Visa	-	-	-	1.019%	12.9%	56 days	£14K
M&NA Limited 0345 606 2062	Platinum Visa	-	-	-	1.019%	12.9%	56 days	£14K

UNSECURED PERSONAL LOANS

		APR	Instant Decision	Fixed monthly payment on £5K for 3 years		
M&S Bank	0800 363400	6.9%	No	£153.68	Early Repayment Charge	Yes
Tesco Bank	0345 600 6016	7.5%	Yes	£154.97	Early Repayment Charge	Yes
Santander	0800 028 4055	7.5%	No	£154.97	Early Repayment Charge	Yes

All borrowing rates and availability are subject to individual credit ratings.

All rates and terms subject to change without notice and should be checked before finalising any arrangement. No liability can be accepted for any direct or consequential loss arising from the use of, or reliance upon, this information. Readers who are not financial professionals should seek expert advice.

Moneyfacts compare.co.uk Figures compiled 8.00am 6.8.26

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Personal Finance

Don't worry about every twist, be diversified to sip back and relax

Tom Watts: Page 27

Fife family country clothing firm hails sales hike

Brian Donnelly

A SCOTTISH family-owned country clothing and boot retailer has posted a rise in sales and profits.

The Fife firm that was founded in 1888 reported a rise in sales to £12.2 million, compared with £11.4m the year before.

Hoggs of Fife, and its Fife Country sub-brand, said it continues to "offer some of the best country clothing and workwear". The company's core activities remain the distribution of these products to the UK retail trade.

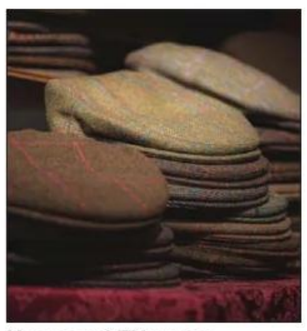
It said this and direct retailing through its own home shopping catalogues and website is "augmented by its Fife-based retail store".

Profit before tax increased from £1.5m to £1.7m.

The firm said: "The company's strategy is to grow sales and profit in all customer groups and product categories, underpinned by product development and improvement, and supported by excellent customer service.

Sales continued to grow on the back of "continued investment in new products, marketing and employees".

Hoggs said in the accounts, posted at the end of May for the year to the end of May 2025, that "the strength of the company's product range continued to attract new business interest, both at home and abroad which, along with a modest increase in product margin, resulted in a healthy growth in sales and profit over the previous year".



Hoggs of Fife was founded in 1888

It added: "Many of the key tasks that the business faces, such as sales predictions, shipping schedules and product lead times, continued to be challenging, but the robust structure of the company's supply chain significantly lessened the impact of these, with a strategy implemented to increase the stock to higher levels pre-autumn/winter in order to guarantee supply to customers at peak times.

"The company also absorbed much of the inflationary pressures exerted by items such as raw inputs and freight costs, in order to support its customers through the next financial year."

Hoggs said cyber security "remains a key risk", and it "continues to mitigate the risks" through outsourcing its IT to a specialist.

Iain Morrison was born in Hong Kong and educated in Scotland

Banking giant hires Scottish veteran for senior role

Scott Wright

THE owner of Royal Bank of Scotland has recruited an HSBC veteran to one of its most senior roles in Scotland.

Iain Morrison, a Scot who spent three decades leading corporate and commercial banking franchises for HSBC across Europe, Asia and the Middle East, has been hired as regional managing director, commercial mid-market for Royal Bank of Scotland, NatWest Group announced yesterday.

He replaces Judith Cruickshank, who was appointed as chief operating officer of NatWest's retail business earlier this year. Ms Cruickshank continues to serve as chair of NatWest's Scotland board.

The Edinburgh-headquartered bank said the appointment of Mr Morrison underlines its commitment to growing its presence north of the Border, "strengthening its position as Scotland's biggest bank for business". It noted that the bank supports 110,000 Scottish businesses, with 7,600 of these in the "vital" mid-market segment.

NatWest stated that although mid-market businesses account for just 1.2% of companies in Scotland, they account for nearly a quarter of the country's workforce. Scotland has seen a 40% increase in the number of mid-market businesses in the past 10 years, it added.

Mr Morrison joins NatWest with a "strong background" in supporting business customers, from small and medium-sized enterprises and mid-market companies to global corporates.

Born in Hong Kong and educated in Scotland, Mr Morrison graduated from the University of Edinburgh, majoring in German and business studies. He joined HSBC in 1997 and worked for the bank for 28 years, supporting clients' local, regional and global banking needs in London, Hong Kong, Dubai, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman and Indonesia.

Most recently he served as managing director and country head of global trade solutions in Singapore.

Mr Morrison said: "I'm delighted to join the Royal Bank of Scotland at such an important moment for the bank and for businesses across Scotland.

"Scotland has a strong community of ambitious mid-market businesses that are vital to jobs, investment and economic growth. As the country's biggest bank for the mid-market segment, we have an important role to play in helping those firms realise their ambitions – whether that is investing for the future, expanding into new markets or navigating the challenges and opportunities ahead.

"I'm looking forward to getting out across Scotland, meeting customers and working with our teams to ensure the Royal Bank continues to provide the practical support, insights and confidence that businesses need to grow."

The bank unveiled Mr Morrison's appointment as senior leaders, including chief executive Paul Thwaite, gather in Scotland to meet colleagues and customers ahead of the bank's 300th anniversary next year. Events include a round table discussion with mid-market business customers in Glasgow.

While the bank endured a turbulent decade following its bailout by the UK Government during the financial crisis of 2008 and 2009, which saw it move into public ownership, it has been routinely making profits and returning dividends to shareholders for several years.

The bank, which changed its name from Royal Bank of Scotland to NatWest at parent group level in 2020, reached a key milestone in May last year when the Treasury sold the last of its shares, allowing the lender to return to full private ownership.

In its latest update to the stock market, published last Friday, NatWest said that first-half operating profits before tax had surged to £4.3 billion for the six months to June 30, up from £3.6bn last year and ahead of market expectations.

Taken alongside the expected contribution of wealth manager Evelyn Partners, the acquisition of which was completed at the end of the first half, the performance allowed the bank to strengthen its guidance for the year.

The bank also hiked its interim dividend and signalled plans to commence its next share buyback earlier than previously guided.

Robert Begbie, chief executive of commercial and institutional banking at NatWest, said: "I'm pleased to welcome Iain to the Royal Bank of Scotland as he takes on this important leadership role for our commercial mid-market business.

"The Royal Bank has been part of Scotland's economic story for almost 300 years, and our ambition is to continue playing a key role in helping Scottish businesses invest, grow and compete.

"Iain brings deep commercial banking experience and a strong track record of supporting businesses across a range of markets, which will be invaluable as we strengthen our support for mid-market customers across Scotland."

Scotland heads one way with house prices as London goes other

Ian McConnell
Business Editor

SCOTLAND recorded significant year-on-year growth in average house prices in July, a key survey reveals.

This increase contrasted with a broadly flat picture in the UK as a whole, with south-east England and London showing year-on-year drops in average house prices in July.

Banking group Lloyds noted, as it published its latest house price index yesterday, that Scotland "continues to record solid growth" in house prices, which were up 3.6% year on year in July to an average of £223,246.

It noted Northern Ireland "remains the UK's strongest performer", with annual house price growth of 7.4% in July. The average residential property price in Northern Ireland last month was £231,131.

In the UK as a whole, the average house price in July was up 0.1% year on year at £299,253 – the slowest rate of inflation since November 2023. The average UK house price was broadly unchanged between June and July.

Lloyds highlighted the contrasting house-price fortunes of different parts of England, with northern regions faring better in terms of the year-on-year movement in residential property values.

The bank said: "In England, stronger price growth remains concentrated in northern regions. The north-east recorded annual growth of 2.8%, taking the average property price to £182,488, while the north-west saw prices rise 2.1% to £247,836.

"By contrast, the weakest regional markets remain in southern England. The south-east saw prices fall 2% year on year to £381,146, while Greater London recorded a 1.3% decline to £533,930."

In Wales, average house prices were up by 1.6% year on year in July at £231,458.

Nicholas Finn, managing director of Garrington Property Finders, said: "While prices are rising steadily in Scotland and Wales, England's north-south divide is becoming more entrenched."

Amanda Bryden, head of mortgages at Lloyds, said: "The UK housing market remained steady in July, with the average property price effectively unchanged over the month (-£143), following a slight rise of 0.2% in June. At £299,253, the average house price is now 0.1% higher than a year ago, the slowest rate of annual growth since November 2023.

"More broadly, average house prices have remained relatively stable for almost two years, moving within a narrow range over that period and sitting just 0.5% higher than they were in November 2024"

She added: "Looking ahead, we expect market activity and house prices to remain relatively stable over the remainder of the year. Developments will be shaped by both how mortgage rates respond to the outlook for inflation and wider household confidence."

Survey reveals the latest year-on-year change

Chief executive Steve Langmead

Scots telecoms chief declares firm 'remains in good health'

Scott Wright

THE boss of an Edinburgh-based telecoms service provider has declared the company "remains in very good health" – despite reporting a fall in profits.

Steve Langmead, chief executive of Commsworld, said the company has a "strong pipeline of opportunities heading into 2026".

His comments came as Commsworld reported that profits had fallen to £3.6 million from £4.7m during a year in which it secured major public sector contracts and grew its recurring revenue base. Turnover was held steady at £36.9m for 2025.

The company said the results were in line with the expectations of its board and noted that although pre-tax profits had fallen, it continued to generate "strong operational cashflow". Earnings before interest, tax, depreciation, and amortisation were booked at £6.2m, down from £7m.

Mr Langmead said: "Commsworld Ltd's results show that the company remains in very good health, with growth in recurring revenue and robust cash generation only strengthening the foundations from which we will grow.

"We continue to focus on Commsworld's strengths – delivering high-quality, flexible, robust and resilient services to our customers. There are challenges in the sector, for example, guiding customers through the Public Switched Telephone Network shutdown, and global business uncertainty resulting in a slowing down of customer decision-making, but our primary aim is to continue to grow and evolve by delivering excellence to our customers."

Commsworld noted that the period covered by its accounts had seen it complete "significant" infrastructure projects for key customers. These include the upgrade of Wigan Council's local and wide area networks and the transition of Glasgow City Council's connectivity services on to the Commsworld network.

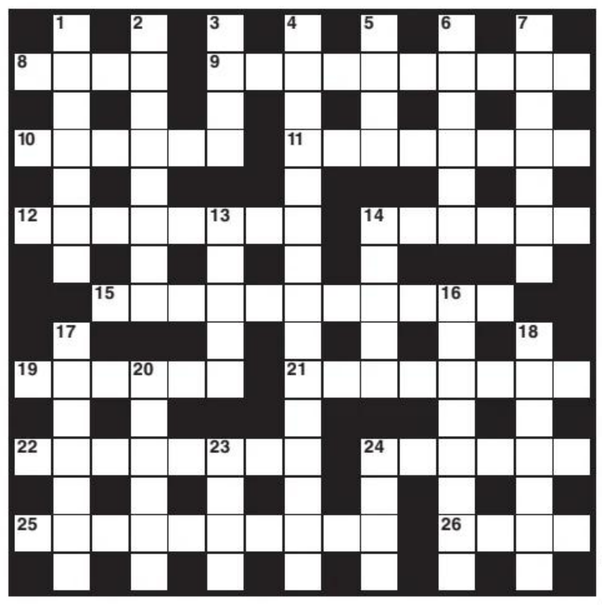
The company also secured several major new contracts, including a 15-year agreement with West Lothian Council to modernise, manage and support its wide area network across public sector sites throughout the region.

The Herald crosswords

More puzzles on Page 24

ACROSS

8 Pale kiss during course (4)
9 Pride's no outcome after I am in jail (10)
10 Recently back in skeletal form (2,4)
11 Infuriated since end uncertain (8)
12 From European airport, flying out to African city (8)
14 Flower of the moggy family? (6)
15 Broken fern coil, dye green? (3-8)
19 Quote again and speak from memory (6)
21 Cut tie with speed (8)
22 Flatten member entering scores wrongly (8)
24 Some mediocre cheeseburgers found in nursery (6)
25 Pressure to rush supply for post-sauna location (6,4)
26 Of sound mind on Parisian river, it's said (4)



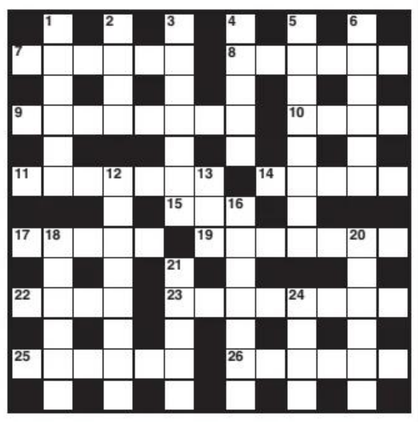
Saturday, 8th August, 2026 — No. 17,479

DOWN

1 Lack of etiquette in rotten class (3,4)
2 Of a ruling family and city's ruin (8)
3 Shivering inside workers' home (4)
4 Political soul in torment is a mirage (7,8)
5 Some chintz in copper metal (4)
6 Poem for boy, with catch (6)
7 Profit from gamble to admit fine mess (7)
13 Lifer misused gun (5)
14 Some fancy niche for a sceptic (5)
16 Huge ship at end of voyage for charity (8)
17 About to design tyre (7)
18 Getting engraving, but not loudly (7)
20 Threaten to come to a devilish conclusion? (6)
23 Jemmy non-starter always (4)
24 Horse's fetlock turned in (4)

ACROSS

7 Triangular Indian pastry (6)
8 Line of latitude (6)
9 Wall art in the street (8)
10 Assassinate (4)
11 Very badly (7)
14 Stolen goods (5)
15 Small dog's bark (3)
17 Small light racing boat (5)
19 Embalm Egyptian-style (7)
22 Mother's mother (4)
23 Electrical-current impeder (8)
25 Move back and forth (3-3)
26 Draw out, extract (6)



DOWN

1 Lacking breadth (6)
2 Volkswagen model (4)
3 Swiftly (7)
4 Loft (5)
5 Study (8)
6 Juvenile porker (6)
12 Very unattractive look (8)
13 Potato-like tuber (3)
16 Follower (7)
18 Trumpet or ice-cream cone (6)
20 Cavort, gambol (6)
21 Physical strength (5)
24 Fruit peel (4)

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTIONS

C	H	A	R	M	O	F	F	E	N	S	I	V	E	
H		R		A		R		X		K		O		A
A	M	B	I	T		A	R	C	H	I	V	I	S	T
T		I		U		U		E		L		L		I
T	U	T	O	R	E	D		L	O	I	T	E	R	S
Y		R		E		S				F				H
	C	A	R	D		T	H	I	R	T	Y	T	W	O
S		T				E		N				A		O
T	R	E	A	S	U	R	E	D		O	O	P	S	
E				H				O		N		D		P
L	A	C	K	I	N	G		N	E	T	B	A	L	L
L		O		A		R		E		A		N		A
A	L	B	A	T	R	O	S	S		R	O	C	K	Y
R		R		S		W		I		I		E		E
	C	A	S	U	A	L	L	A	B	O	U	R	E	R

	C		W		E		H		K		C			
T	H	W	A	C	K		E	L	I	X	I	R		
	A		R		E		Y		N		C			
S	P	R	Y		O	L	D		D	E	A	N		
	E				U		A				D			
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			S						A					
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	R				E		P				T			
D	I	S	C		A	U	K		S	O	U	L		
	M		O		L		E		E		P			
C	A	S	K	E	T		E	N	T	A	I	L		
	L		E		H		P		T		D			

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